

# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

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VOL. XV

No. 1

FOR FEBRUARY 1905

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# Victor wins Grand Prize

Read this letter from the  
judges of  
musical instruments  
at the St. Louis Exposition

**Ernest R. Kroeger**  
Chairman  
Bureau of Music,  
World's Fair

**N. J. Corey**  
Secretary,  
Organ Expert and  
Musical Lecturer  
Detroit

**Emil Mollenhauer**  
Director Handel and  
Haydn Society  
and Apollo Club  
of Boston

**Oliver C. Faust**  
New England  
Conservatory  
of Music, Boston

**John A. O'Shea**  
Organist St. Cecilia  
Church and Teacher  
of Music in the Public  
Schools of Boston

**Richard W. Gertz**  
Tone Expert and Secretary  
of Mason & Hamlin  
Piano & Organ Co.; also  
Wm. Gertz Piano Co.,  
Hanover, Germany

**Max H. Mattes**  
Tone Expert on Pianos  
and Organs for the  
New York Conservatory  
of Music

**Chas. Kunkel**  
Composer and  
Expert Pianist  
St. Louis

**Adam Jakob**  
Expert on String  
and Wind Instruments,  
Philadelphia

**Theo. B. Spiering**  
Violin Expert,  
Chicago Musical  
College

**Dr. F. C. Rieloff**  
Imperial  
German Consul,  
St. Louis

**Emile Terquem**  
Music Publisher,  
Paris, France

December 8, 1904.  
Group Jury 21.

The Jury of Awards on Musical Instruments at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition gave the Victor Talking Machine and Victor Records the Grand Prize, the highest possible award over all other talking machines at the Exposition.

The Victor was the only talking machine that received from the musical jury a percentage high enough to be entitled to a Grand Prize, under the rules governing the judging of exhibits.

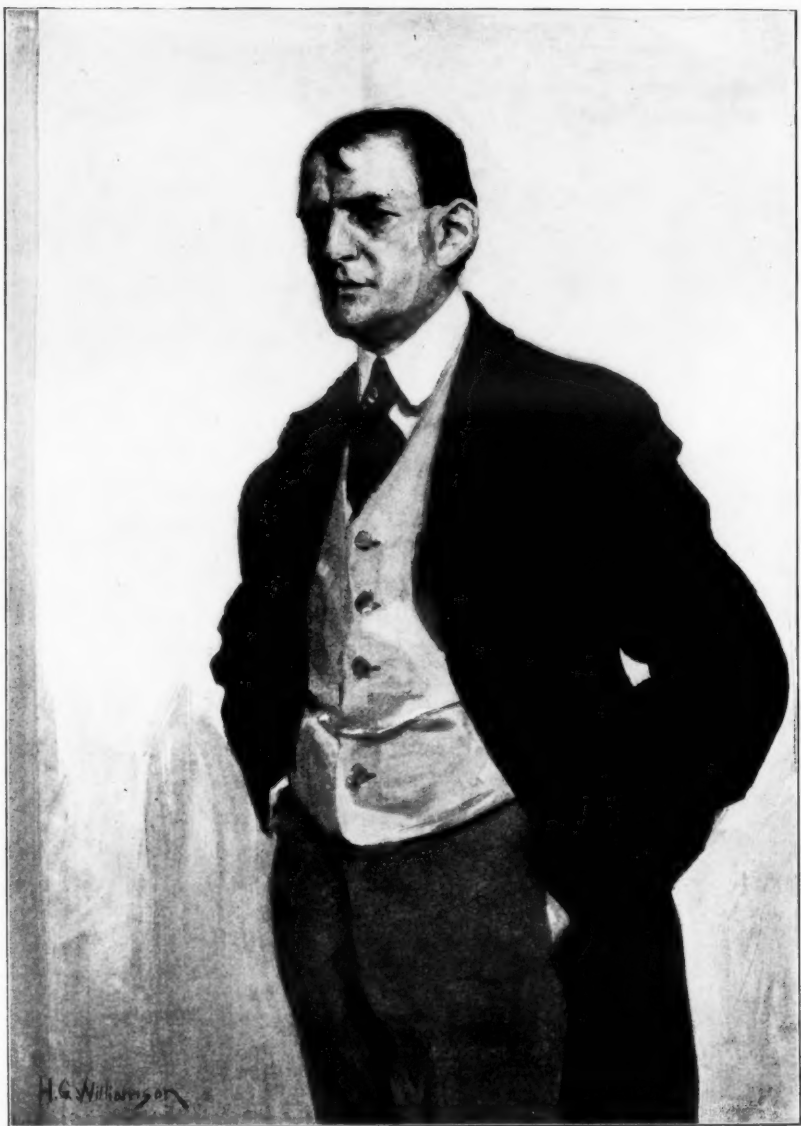
The Grand Prize was unanimously awarded by this jury of musical experts to the Victor Talking Machine, because of its marked superiority as a musical instrument over all other sound reproducing machines shown.

*E. R. Kroeger* *N. J. Corey*  
*Emil Mollenhauer* *Oliver C. Faust*  
*John A. O'Shea* *Richard W. Gertz*  
*Max H. Mattes* *Chas. Kunkel*  
*Adam Jakob* *Theo. B. Spiering*  
*F. C. Rieloff* *Emile Terquem*

Victor  
Talking  
Machine







*"The Deluge," by David Graham Phillips.—page 131.*

"This story of mine is a cross-section out of the very heart of the life of to-day, with its big and bold energies and passions—the swiftest and fiercest life ever lived by the human race."

MATTHEW BLACKLOCK.



# AINSLIE'S

VOL. XV

FEBRUARY 1905

NO. I



HOSE who doubt that fate now and then indulges in irony should have observed the manner in which Hewington Acres came into the possession of "Cherub" Devine.

"That man, of all persons!" exclaimed Mr. De Courcay Hewington, when he learned of the sale. "I wonder if he knows?"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Devine did not know. He had never even heard of the Hewingtons, of their distinguished ancestry, of their high social standing, or of their declining fortunes.

But, of course, all the world then knew of "Cherub" Devine. The man in the street could tell you all about him, how he had evolved from office-boy for

a Chicago stockbroker into a many millioned speculator, whose audacious methods were shaking things up in Wall Street. Anyone could have told you exactly the kind of man he was—and missed the mark widely.

For Mr. Devine was not so easily estimated. It was more or less unprofitable to generalize about him, still more rash to be specific. It may be said, however, that his was a buoyant soul. Perhaps it was this, visible in his widest blue eyes, perhaps it was only the pink chubbiness of his cleanly shaven cheeks, which earned him the name of "Cherub," a designation applied impartially by irreverent brokers, pert messenger boys, and staid heads of great corporations. Being intensely urban, citified in all his

tastes and habits, and an enthusiastic bachelor besides, it was quite absurd for him to buy a place in the country. Yet that was precisely what he did, one day when it was currently reported that the market had gone against him. At closing time he had no thought of such a thing. Half an hour later he met a real estate man who, by way of a joke, made the proposal.

"Cherub," said he, "I've got a gilt edged suburban property that you ought to buy, and it's going dirt cheap on foreclosure."

"Yes?" responded the "Cherub," gazing genially at the ornate ceiling over the rim of a glass of milk and vichy.

"It's Hewington Acres, up on the Sound. You know about the Hewingtons; swell family, but gone all to smash financially. There's twenty acres of park along the water, nice little forty-room cottage—"

"Only forty?"

"Yes, but there are stables, conservatories, and the like, besides. It's all furnished and goes as it stands, even to the servants, if you want them. Just the place for a family man like you;" and the humorous real estate man winked gleefully.

"How much?" queried the "Cherub."

"The receivers would be glad to get sixty thousand, but it's worth double."

"I'll take it," said "Cherub"; finished his milk and vichy, munched a water cracker, wrote a check for the amount, and then played cushion-caroms until dinner time.

Apparently he forgot all about the transaction until three weeks later when, finding himself with a closing Saturday, a Sunday and an ensuing holiday on his hands, he suddenly decided to run up and look at his new possession. Even then he had to telephone the real estate man to find out where Hewington Acres was and how you got to it.

He was met at the station by one Timmins, who introduced himself as caretaker and general superintendent. A sharp-nosed, undersized little man was Timmins, one of that class of Englishmen who seem born to serve. Timmins waved him obsequiously into a yel-

low-wheeled park trap drawn by a glossy pair of cobs.

"Whose team?" said Mr. Devine.

"Yours, sir," said Timmins.

The "Cherub" got out and walked around the team twice, eying the rig as curiously as a boy does a Christmas toy. These were the first horses he had ever owned.

The high-stepping cobs had whirled them along half a mile of sand-papered macadam before Timmins ventured to unload something which appeared to lie heavily on his mind.

"Begging your pardon, sir, for being so bold, but I was told to tell you that the Hewingtons haven't all left."

"You don't say?" Mr. Devine seemed quite undisturbed by the revelation.

"It's because of the old lady, sir, Mr. Hewington's sister, who was took so bad she couldn't be moved. There's a nurse with her, sir, along with Mr. Hewington and the Countess Vecchi."

"The which?" Mr. Devine removed a black cigar from his chubby countenance, and tore his gaze from fascinated contemplation of the rounded quarters of the horses.

"The Countess Vecchi, sir, as stayed to look after the aunt. The countess is the married daughter, sir."

"Oh! Imported a count, did they? Is he knocking around the place, too?"

"The count's been dead two years, sir, and"—here Timmins coughed apologetically behind his hand—"the Hewingtons wa'n't precisely sorry to lose him."

"Not a howling success, eh?"

"Hardly, sir. The countess left him two hours after the wedding."

"She must be a hummer," observed the "Cherub," and then, reflectively: "Countesses are hardly in my line. You can just drive me around the place and then back to the station. I don't want to disturb the old lady."

"Lord, sir, you won't see any of them!

No sooner did they hear you were coming than they moved into the top floor of the east wing and there they've shut themselves up like the house was quarantined. Besides, sir, there isn't another train you could get to the city until the ten-thirty-three to-night."

Mr. Devine resumed his cigar and lapsed into silent and thoughtful contemplation of the horses, finally remarking that he "guessed he would see the thing through."

Timmins, it appeared, had spoken truly. About the low-roofed, many-windowed "cottage," with its *portecochère*, servants' annex and glass-roofed conservatory, was no hint of occupants. Empty were the deep verandas. Across the vividly green lawn no one was in sight. The shades of all the front windows were drawn, and the yellow and white awnings masked them still more. It was as if the place had been put to sleep by a mesmerist. The "Cherub" was almost startled when the big front door swung open and a servant appeared to take his luggage.

"Shall I show you through the house first, sir?" suggested Timmins.

Mr. Devine glanced into the darkened vista of hall, and remarked carelessly: "Oh, I guess the house'll keep. Let's have a look at the stable."

Inside of an hour he was smoking lonesomely on the front veranda, trying to summon a sense of ownership and doing his best to convince himself that this sort of thing was just what he needed.

"Fine thing, the country," Mr. Devine was accustomed to assure his friends. "Mean to spend a whole month there some time—and then die."

Usually a man much given to silence, even among intimates, Mr. Devine now felt that he wanted to talk. The solemn stillness was oppressive. He longed to break it, or, at least, to hear it broken. Why couldn't the servants slam doors or break a few dishes?

It was something of a relief when dinner time came, although he found himself alone in the big dining room with a butler of melancholy face and frigid mien.

## II.

"What's your name?" he asked of this personage.

"Eppings, sir. Soup, sir?" Both reply and question were sepulchral.

"Yes, I'll have some soup. Grandmother dead?"

"Beg pardon, sir?" Eppings paused with his hand on the tureen cover.

"Grandmother dead?" repeated Mr. Devine.

"She is, sir."

"Thought so. Mine is, too. But cheer up; you'll get over it."

"Thank you, sir." It was all Eppings could think of at the moment, for he was much puzzled. He had not recovered when a bell rang somewhere, and he appeared glad of an opportunity to escape. There ensued, out in the reception hall, a whispered conversation which Mr. Devine could hardly avoid hearing, although he was certain it was not meant for his ears.

"Is that—that dreadful man in there, Eppings?" asked a voice.

"Wonder if that's me?" thought Mr. Devine. He could not catch the butler's reply.

"Then I must go in," continued the voice. "But listen, Eppings, don't you go beyond call. And you, Marie, follow close behind me, but don't be hysterical and scream unless he is actually violent. Eppings, tell him I am coming."

Eppings reappeared to announce impressively: "The Countess Vecchi, sir."

"Well, what about her?" demanded Mr. Devine. "Does she want the soup?"

"She is coming in, sir. She is——"

Further explanation was unnecessary, for in the doorway stood the countess herself, followed by a French maid. Mr. Devine had a vague notion that all countesses were large, stout women who wore some sort of crown, floating robes and a multitude of rings. This one was very different. She was a slender, graceful, big-eyed young woman, attired as simply as the waitresses at the dairy lunch where the "Cherub" was accustomed to go for his midday meal of crackers and milk.

"I—I hope Timmins has explained to you, Mr. Devine, our embarrassing situation here," she began, hesitatingly, nervously clasping and unclasping her fingers.

Mr. Devine nodded.

"My father wishes me to say that the serious condition of my aunt makes it impossible for us to leave the house at present. Just as soon as she improves we will all go away."

"Oh, that's all right; stay as long as you like."

"But we don't want to stay at all. My father wishes you to understand that. It—it is very painful for him to accept a favor, even toleration, from you. He charged me not to apologize, however, as the circumstances are beyond our control. I am not apologizing, you see, only explaining." There was much earnestness in her words and a pleading, half-frightened expression in her big, brown eyes.

"Oh, you're doing fine," said Mr. Devine, assuringly. "Anything else the old gentleman wants me to understand?"

"No, I think that is——" The countess was interrupted by Marie, who began an agitated whispering in her ear. The countess shook her head. Marie became still more agitated. "During your stay," continued the countess, "we shall keep to our rooms."

"Oh, you needn't do that," protested Mr. Devine.

"But it is my father's desire," added the countess, and then, in response to more whispering from Marie: "And we shall take all our meals there."

"Oh, come," said Mr. Devine, "that isn't necessary. You tell your father to make himself at home here until he's ready to go. I won't bite him, or you either. Just you sit down here and have some dinner, and send the girl up for the old gentleman."

"*Non! non! non!*" exclaimed Marie, who had been peering over the shoulder of the countess, following this triple negative with a string of spluttering French phrases which were only ended when the countess forcibly suppressed them by placing her hand over the maid's mouth.

"Marie is so nervous," she explained. "No, I could not think of doing such a thing. Papa would never allow it."

"Looks as if I didn't stand very well

with your father," commented Mr. Devine. "Is there anything special?"

"He thinks that you are rather—that is, that you—you——" A sudden rush of color came into the olive-shaded cheeks of the countess, and her brown eyes began to study the rug pattern. Mr. Devine suddenly decided that sometimes countesses were nice to look at.

"Yes," he said, encouragingly, "rather what?"

"Well, rather wild and wicked and reckless, you know. He was afraid that you might become—er—intoxicated."

A cherubic expression spread over the pink-and-white face of Mr. Devine. "Thinks I'm a sort of a cross between a cowboy and a pirate, eh? Seems to know all about me, too!"

"He has read about you in the newspapers," ventured the countess, with a shy, half-curious glance, which for an instant met the calm, level gaze of Mr. Devine's blue eyes.

"Oh!" The "Cherub" spoke as one who has seen a light. "Something about how I spent half a million in Paris one week—or was it a million?"

"Half a million, the paper said. But you won it all back at Monte Carlo the next week, didn't you? We read about the big poker game, too; the one that started in Liverpool and ended off Sandy Hook."

"That *was* a corker!"

"And the champagne supper you gave to forty chorus girls."

"Yes, I believe there were forty. You have certainly kept well posted."

The Countess Vecchi hesitated a moment before making response. She cast an inquiring glance at Mr. Devine.

"I—I suppose that I should explain," she began. "Papa, you see, is interested in sociology."

"Sort of an anarchist, eh?" suggested the "Cherub."

"Oh, no, no! Not socialism, but sociology, the study of social conditions and all that. He reads books about it and gathers statistics. He is writing a pamphlet on the subject."

Mr. Devine nodded uncomprehendingly.

"He has been particularly interested

in—in your career. In fact, he has made quite a study of it. He gets everything that is printed about you from a newspaper clipping bureau, and he has the pieces pasted in a big scrapbook."

"In a book, eh?"

"There are such a lot of them, it's the only way."

"Must make lively reading."

"Oh, it does. Papa says that you are a typical product of the present commercial age."

"Well, that's nice of him; I've been called worse names."

"Of course"—here the countess nerved herself to look sternly at the smiling Mr. Devine—"he disapproves very strongly of you. He says it isn't simply that you spend so much money foolishly, but that you set such a bad example to other young men who cannot afford, perhaps, to follow it."

"Yes, that's a good point," assented Mr. Devine, judicially.

"Then you are not ashamed? You do not deny?" The brown eyes of the countess opened very wide.

"Well, I'm not exactly proud of some things I've done, but I'm not ashamed, either, and I never deny anything; it would keep me too busy."

"Of course, I know that the newspapers often exaggerate," admitted the countess. "Perhaps they have about you."

"Think so? Why?"

The Countess Vecchi paused long enough to look across the table at the clear-skinned, chubby face of Mr. Devine.

"Well, you don't look at all as I had expected."

"Horns and hoofs not in evidence?" chuckled the "Cherub."

"You know what I mean," protested the countess. "One can usually recognize the marks of—of dissipation."

"Oh, you can't always tell by the looks," which remark Mr. Devine accompanied by a whimsical puckering of the lips, a maneuver that did not escape the countess.

"No, you cannot," she said, decidedly; "and papa is quite certain that you

are an improper person. Come, Marie, we must go."

"Too wicked for you to eat dinner with, am I?"

"Papa thinks so."

"And he has read the newspapers, eh? All right. But it's dull business, eating alone."

"I couldn't make up for the absence of forty chorus girls." She delivered this parting shot over her shoulder.

"I'm not so sure about that," replied the "Cherub." "You'll tell your father, won't you, that the dreadful man is not yet intoxicated?"

The countess paused at the door. "I shall tell him something of the kind, certainly."

"And then you'll all barricade yourselves in your rooms. Well, good-night and pleasant dreams." The "Cherub" waved a solemn farewell with his napkin as the countess disappeared with Marie toward the stairs.

But Mr. Devine had not seen the last of the countess for that night. In a moment she came back, alone.

"I—I hope I did not say too much," she began, glancing timidly at him. "You are not offended, are you?"

Mr. Devine smiled reassuringly. "Do I look very savage?"

"I was afraid, you know, that on thinking it over, about the clippings and so on, you might be angry. If you should meet my father you wouldn't say anything about it, would you?"

There was a look in her eyes which somehow made the "Cherub" feel as if he had been shaking a club at her.

"Not a word from me. Why, I would act as if we were the best of friends."

"Oh, you mustn't do that, either! Papa would not like that. He doesn't even know that I am talking to you now. He told me to have Eppings give you his message, but I thought that I could explain things better if I came myself."

"You're right; Eppings would have made a mess of it."

"But papa mustn't know. He is so stern, you see, and he thinks that you are so—well, so—"

"Yes, I see. I've got a fair working

plan of the way he has me sized up. I'm used to that sort of thing, though. It don't bother me a bit."

"Oh!" The eyes of the countess widened a trifle. "I'm glad you feel that way. It makes it easier for me to say something about which I hesitated. You see, I have been almost as deeply interested in following your career as my father has."

"Have you? That's nice."

"But not in the same way. Papa, you know, is merely shocked and indignant at the wild things you do. He thinks that you should be restrained or punished, but I tell him that perhaps it is all owing to the influences which surround you, your companions, you know, and the men you meet in business. They are not very nice men, are they?"

"Most of them manage to keep out of jail."

"Yes, of course; but tell me, are they men of refinement and good morals? Don't they drink heavily and gamble and—and do other things which they shouldn't?"

"Well, there are a good many high rollers in our bunch."

"And they lead you on to do as they do, don't they? And there isn't anyone to tell you that you are worthy of better things? I knew it! But if you could be brought into contact with a different class, if you could mingle with persons in the higher grades of society, I am sure you would wish to live differently."

"Think I ought to go in for society, do you?" The "Cherub's" beaming face presented a picture of complacent interest.

"Well, in a way. Of course, you would find it difficult to step at once into the best society, but you could make a beginning."

"I could work up, eh?"

"It would be slow; there is so much reserve about our best families. In fact, there are certain circles which you would probably find it impossible to enter."

"Couldn't break in with an ax, I suppose?"

The countess smiled. "You have such an odd way of putting things. It

wouldn't be necessary for you to enter the most exclusive sets, but there are plenty of nice people that you could meet; that is, if you wanted to change your associates."

"You think it would be a good scheme, do you?"

"Oh, splendid! You'll not mind my speaking to you about it, will you? You see, I have wanted for a long time to do something of the kind for some one. Our bishop has urged me to go into home missionary work. I have tried, but the villagers here are so unresponsive that I haven't had much success."

"Well, you can try any kind of reform on me that you like."

"Oh, the bishop will be delighted when I tell him! He rather expected, you know, that I would merely work among the poor of this parish—folks who are not so much wicked as they are lazy and shiftless. I never dreamed, of course, of having an opportunity for influencing anyone so—well, such as yourself," and the countess favored him with a glance in which curiosity and pride of discovery were oddly mixed.

"It's what you might call a stroke of luck for both of us, isn't it?" queried the "Cherub." "Why, I've never had a show of reforming before, except once when I was held up by a Salvation Army girl, who wanted me to follow the band and be saved. But just how are you going to tackle the job?"

"I'm sure I don't know." Perplexity dwelt in the brown eyes for an instant. "I have had so little experience. But I want to do something while you are here. It is my idea, you know, that personal influence and example count for a good deal. If I could only talk to you about your reckless habits—"

"Well, why not? There'll be all day to-morrow."

"But probably I shall not see you again. Papa doesn't expect me to."

"Oh, say, you're not going to stay shut up in your rooms all day, are you?"

"Except for a little walk in the garden right after breakfast."

"About nine o'clock, eh? I'll be there."



"No, no, you mustn't! That is, you mustn't plan to be there. Of course, if it should be purely by accident——"

"I'll see to that part of it, all right. You'll be in the garden, will you?"

The countess hesitated. Then she half whispered: "Possibly," gave him an elusive glance, and fled as if to escape the results of her daring.

Whereupon Eppings, a shade more cheerful of countenance, but still amazingly dignified, came in to remove the soup.

"Epsoms, my man——" began Mr. Devine.

"Beg pardon, sir; Eppings, sir."

"Well, Eppings, then; you really must forget about that lost grandmother of yours."

"Ye-e-es, sir. I'll try, sir. Will you have the sauterne now, sir?" Eppings displayed a dust-covered bottle.

"No, no. Milk for me, Eppings, always milk. Remember that I've drowned the memory of two grandmothers, Eppings, and I never used anything stronger than milk."

It was not often that the "Cherub" attempted a joke all by himself. Perhaps that was why this one so sadly miscarried.

"Most hextraordinary man, the new master," reported Eppings in the servants' quarters. "Thinks I'm mourning for my grandmother when, bless me, the old lady's dead and gone these twenty years."

"They say he's an awfully wild young man," commented Mrs. Timmins, the housekeeper, who was as stout and as aggressive as Timmins was thin and obsequious. "I've heard that he cuts up something scandalous and gets his name in the papers. Marie told me. But I've warned my man, Timmins, that I won't stand it. 'Timmins,' says I, 'the very moment that Mr. Devine begins to carry on here we leaves. We've always had service with well-behaved, gentle folks, and them's the kind I want to be with.' That's what I told him, straight and flat, and I ain't goin' to see Timmins led into all sorts of deviltry, no matter how rich the folks are that does it. No, sir!" and Mrs. Timmins dropped her

broad palms defiantly on her substantial hips.

### III.

As to the matter of raiment, Mr. "Cherub" Devine was fastidious in but one particular. He was fond of fancy waistcoats. Had the other details of his wardrobe been planned in like proportions, it would have been as bulky as that of a Chinese mandarin.

But his fastidiousness began and ended with waistcoats. His trousers and coats were invariably of the same cloth and cut, summer and winter, year in and year out. His waistcoats betrayed a catholic taste for color and variety. He ordered new ones whenever he could spare time for the serious business of selecting a new pattern. Whenever he felt like indulging himself, or celebrating a victory, or forgetting a defeat, he went out and bought a new waistcoat.

As he was "traveling light," he had brought to Hewington Acres a bare half dozen of them, and of these he had narrowed the choice to two; one a creation of tobacco-brown silk, with red dots in it, the other a white piqué with buttons of smoked pearl. Which should he wear for a Sunday morning stroll in the garden? In the end he tossed a quarter. The brown silk won, much to his satisfaction, for he had a new-born suspicion that the white one made his waist line appear more rotund than it really was.

Not that Mr. Devine often displayed such vanity. He was a little puzzled himself over this whim. Rather indefinitely he connected it with the Countess Vecchi. Yet when he thought of her he laughed.

Still, he was in the garden at nine o'clock. Probably it was mere curiosity that led the "Cherub" to pace up and down the trimly-kept walks for a long half hour. He was about to give up the vigil and leave, when he caught sight of the countess peering from behind one of the stone gate posts. She dodged out of sight at first glimpse of him, but a moment later she reappeared, followed by Marie, who glanced nervously toward the house.

Making a pretense of not having seen her, Mr. Devine sauntered up to the gate, and seemed surprised when he found her before him. He noted that this morning she was in gray, with something white at her throat. He even remembered that last night she had worn black. His "good-morning" was intended to carry out the idea of a purely accidental meeting, but it met with no similar response.

"You must not misunderstand my coming here," she began, hurriedly. "It was very wrong of me to think of such a thing. I came only to tell you so."

"Anything new about me in the Sunday papers?"

"No, but papa was talking about you again last night, and he——"

"Oh, that's the trouble! He got out his scrapbook. Which chapter of my many wickednesses furnished the text this time?"

"He read to me about that French singer."

"La Belle Savoy?"

"Yes, the one to whom you gave the diamond tiara which was stolen."

"Oh, yes. That was Kittie's birthday present. Nice little thing, Kittie. Her real name is O'Neill, you know."

"Why, the clipping said she was a famous Parisian *chanteuse*!"

"Shouldn't be surprised; those press agents are great on fancy names. But Kittie's a Chicago girl, just the same. Her mother used to run a boarding house there. I know, because Mrs. O'Neill took care of me for three weeks once, when I was sick and hadn't a dollar."

"Oh!" said the Countess Vecchi, beginning to retreat. "It—it is very interesting."

"But doesn't make good, eh? Well, that's the best I can do. What! you're not going?"

The countess, half towed by Marie, was retreating up the path, but she still kept her brown eyes fixed on Mr. Devine. There was a curious, apprehensive look in them, such as a small boy bestows on a cannon cracker to which he has touched a match.

"Yes, I ought to go directly back."

"But how about the reform? I thought we were to have a talk, and that you were going to give me some pointers on breaking into good society. You're not going to quit like this, are you?"

The countess shook her head. "I—I ought to return," was all she would say.

"Then I suppose I'll just have to keep on going to the dogs," observed the "Cherub" dolefully. "I didn't know I was quite such a hopeless case, though."

"Oh, it isn't that, it isn't that!" protested the countess.

"Must be," declared the "Cherub."

"If it wasn't you wouldn't run away like this. Why, I'm so bad that you won't talk to me. I don't suppose that you'd even shake hands with anyone so wicked."

The countess made a gesture of dissent.

"But you know you wouldn't," he insisted.

It may have been merely a womanly impulse, perhaps it was the pathetic spectacle of the "Cherub's" injured feelings. Tears showed suddenly in the brown eyes of the countess.

"Oh, you mustn't feel that way, you mustn't!" she pleaded. "Of course I will. There!" Impulsively she extended both hands to him. Rather awkwardly Mr. Devine took them in his. Then he did not know what to do next, whether to let go or to hold on.

He had not fully decided when a tall, gray-haired man of stern face and dignified bearing appeared behind them. He seemed very much astonished at the scene.

"Adèle, who is this?" he demanded.

"This, father, is Mr. Devine." It was finely done. No hesitancy, no trembling of voice, no wavering of the eyes.

"Not the—the—" Mr. Hewington balked at pronouncing the familiar nickname.

"Yes, the 'Cherub.' Isn't it, Mr. Devine?"

Mr. Devine nodded a good-natured assent.

"But, Adèle, this is entirely unexpected. I had no idea that you were acquainted with this—er—Mr. Devine."

"I have only been telling him that I



should not see him again during his stay."

"Ah! Quite proper. I am sure that Mr. Devine does not expect it. Good-day, sir. Come, Adèle."

Dutifully the countess followed her father out of the garden. Watching them disappear in the direction of the big house, Mr. Devine thoughtfully clipped the end from a fat, black cigar. Seating himself on a vine-shaded bench, the "Cherub" proceeded to puff little blue rings up toward the unheeding leaves.

#### IV.

The ash on Mr. Devine's cigar, however, was not an eighth of an inch longer before he was surprised to see Mr. Hewington reappear before him. The Hewingtons, it seemed, were addicted to postscripts.

"Wonder if he's come back with a stick," reflected the "Cherub."

But Mr. Hewington's manner was not openly hostile.

"It has just occurred to me, Mr. Devine," he began, "that you might fancy our attitude somewhat discourteous. If so, you are in error. We are merely maintaining, under rather awkward conditions, our customary reserve. Do you follow me, sir?"

"I get a glimmer now and then," complacently rejoined the "Cherub." "You mean that you're not mixers."

Mr. Hewington smiled coldly at the metaphor. "Society is apt to make distinctions," he continued. "Perhaps you do not know that our family has been prominent since Colonial times. My great aunt married a son of the Marquis de Lafayette."

"Never met the gentleman," commented the "Cherub."

"Probably not. He came to America in 1815."

"So? Then he got here before I did."

Mr. Hewington ignored this remark. "This estate, Mr. Devine, was part of the original grant. In my father's time it extended for fifteen miles along the Sound. The old mansion, which stood for nearly a century, was honored by the presence of such men as Daniel Web-

ster, President Tyler and others. Charles Dickens was a guest here during his tour of this country. In the present house the late Mrs. Hewington and myself have welcomed many distinguished personages. Then, as you know, my daughter is the Countess Vecchi, allied by marriage to one of the noblest families of Lombardy."

"Seems to me I heard something about that."

"Possibly, possibly." Mr. Hewington waved his eyeglasses impatiently. "I am telling you these things, Mr. Devine, that you may have a better understanding of our attitude. I might also add that my daughter is of a very nervous and excitable temperament. Since the death of the count she has lived in seclusion. She has almost entirely withdrawn from society. She has a positive dread of strangers."

Mr. Devine looked keenly at the old gentleman. "I see," he observed. "Kind of flocks by herself. Well, I've no objection. I didn't come up here especially to get acquainted with you folks, you know. In fact, you and the countess were rather sprung on me as a surprise."

Mr. Hewington might have been seen to shudder. "My dear Mr. Devine," he protested, "I fear that you still fail to realize our position. Circumstances compel us to remain here during your stay. There is my sister——"

"Yes, I know all about that, and I wouldn't for the world disturb the sick lady. I'm just trying to be sociable. I want you to stay until you're ready to leave."

"Ah, that is the very thing I wish to speak about. You see, it is quite uncertain when we shall leave or where we shall go. I had thought of going abroad"—here Mr. Hewington waved his glasses as if to indicate that anywhere in Europe, Asia or Africa might become his destination—"but there is the matter of expense. It is very annoying to be forced to consider such details, Mr. Devine, very annoying."

"It's all of that," assented Mr. Devine.

"Besides," resumed Mr. Hewington,

"there would be the cost of maintaining abroad an establishment such as this. Really, I don't see how I could manage it. Sometimes I think that I should give more attention to my business affairs. I find it embarrassing to be without funds. I have written several letters to my attorneys, urging them to forward a check at once. But they send nothing but excuses. They talk about mortgages and foreclosures and overdrawn accounts. Just as though I could tell them what to do! So you see, Mr. Devine, that my plans for the immediate future are very uncertain."

"Yes, that seems to be the word. What does the countess say about it?"

"I never discuss matters of business with my daughter. Women do not understand such matters. Of course, it is necessary to have her sign papers now and then. The lawyers insist on it, some of the property having been left to her, but I never try to explain things which I do not fully comprehend myself. The sale of this place, for instance, still perplexes me. I did not desire it at all. I suppose, however, that it was necessary, as a matter of form. Probably you have a clearer notion of it than I, Mr. Devine."

"Your idea is a bit hazy," admitted the "Cherub."

"Perhaps so, but I presume that your—er—possession here is only a temporary arrangement. Matters will soon be adjusted, I suppose, when my attorneys finally get around to it. My daughter was more or less worried until I assured her that I would attend to the affair personally."

"Then she cheered up, did she?" Mr. Devine appeared to find the conversation entertaining.

"She was relieved, of course. But I have been so engrossed in preparing a pamphlet on—well, on a scientific subject, which would not be of interest to you—that I have neglected to take the proper steps. However, now that you thoroughly understand the situation, I trust that you will not act hastily."

"Oh, I shan't put you out, or anything like that, Mr. Hewington. Make your mind easy on that score."

"It is very considerate of you, sir. Of course, until the affair is settled, we shall not encroach on your technical right of possession more than is absolutely necessary. If the present arrangement is satisfactory, I would suggest that it be continued."

The "Cherub" favored Mr. Hewington with a whimsical smile. "Well, we'll let the thing drift for a while, anyway. Only, you don't have to act as though you were prisoners. Why don't you and the countess come down to your meals, just as though I wasn't here?"

"My dear sir—" Here Mr. Hewington began an exhaustive review of the situation. When he was through, Mr. Devine chuckled gleefully. It was an amazingly simple proposition. He, the "Cherub," being a necessary evil, was to be endured as gracefully as possible, in much the same way as a merchant endures the presence of a deputy sheriff installed in his store during bankruptcy proceedings. As for any other recognition, that was out of the question. The Hewingtons were the Hewingtons, and he—well, he was "Cherub" Devine. That told the story. He was to know that the countess viewed him as something between a marauding burglar and an officious policeman.

It was all done very courteously and delicately, in Mr. Hewington's fine, aristocratic manner, yet nothing but the superlative buoyancy of Mr. Devine's audacious soul saved him from being utterly crushed.

"I wish I could have dreams like that," soliloquized the "Cherub," when he had been left alone.

Yet upon reviewing the situation carefully, he decided that the realities could be sufficiently entertaining if looked at in the right way.

He had anticipated rather a dull and uneventful time of it when he had started for Hewington Acres. He had thought, however, that two days absolutely free from mental effort of any kind would be good for him. But the possibilities incident upon acquiring a quiet country house were surprising. He not only found himself playing the part of an unwelcome host, but regarded

variously as an upstart intruder, a heavy villain and an unregenerate sinner. It was just a little confusing. The "Cherub" was glad of a chance to think the thing over.

His first impulse was to take the next train back to the city and shift to his lawyers the whole responsibility of dealing with the Hewingtons. But, on second thought, he decided that this would not do at all. He knew what course his lawyers would take. They would neither smile at the pompous absurdities of old Mr. Hewington nor be moved by the pathetic trustfulness of the little countess. They would care nothing for appealing glances from brown eyes. The eyes might be filled with tears. No, he must attend to this business himself.

To be sure, he might simply go away and leave them at Hewington Acres indefinitely, but he felt that this would be shirking, and the "Cherub's" way was to face a proposition squarely. Besides, he did not quite relish the rôle of social outcast which the Hewingtons seemed to think he was filling. While he believed himself to be wholly without pride in such matters, the fact remained that Mr. Devine was far from being humble. To be classed as an inferior, to be regarded condescendingly, even by such an impractical person as Mr. Hewington, hurt a little. As for the countess, she ought to have a chance to find out that he wasn't such a bogie man as she fancied him.

More or less thought did Mr. Devine bestow upon the Countess Vecchi during the next half hour. He had a well-defined idea, had the "Cherub," that his knowledge of women was vast and deep. Oh, he had seen lots of them. They had been of all kinds, too. It was part of his philosophy that the wise man kept out of their way, that generally they meant mischief, and that when they didn't they were most dangerous.

So, in spite of what he regarded as many allurements, he had held himself aloof. He lived at a bachelor hotel, frequented clubs where the swish of skirts was never heard, and even banished girl stenographers from his offices. The only risk he ran of being entrapped

in feminine snares was at the dairy lunch, where the neatly gowned, rosy-cheeked waitresses smiled vainly at him across the counter.

"No, thank you." This was the "Cherub's" attitude toward the sex. One experience was quite enough for him. For there had been more to that affair with Kittie O'Neill than he had told the countess. He was hardly out of his teens then, to be sure, and Kittie, having achieved one-and-twenty and a position in the second row of the chorus, had viewed his awkward advances with silent scorn, until one eventful day when she had fully revealed her attitude by a sudden burst of derisive laughter. Kittie had lived to regret that ill-timed disclosure, for she had seen her mother's charity boarder develop into a man of millions. "Cherub" Devine's faith in womankind had been destroyed, however, and the women who had later tried to restore it had signally failed. Perhaps they had not been especially well-fitted for the task.

But in the presence of the Countess Vecchi he forgot all his suspicions. It was as if he had discovered a new species, a much finer, rarer, more delicate and, in every way, more delectable species. He was quite sure that no one just like her had ever existed before.

Therefore it was amazingly unjust that she should look upon him as an outcast or as a burning brand of sin. But what was he to do about it? He couldn't tell her what a good fellow he was, and she had no chance of finding it out for herself so long as the old gentleman regarded him as socially unfit. This last thought rankled deep.

"I see," exclaimed the "Cherub" at last. "I've got to qualify in his class. Well, here goes!"

## V.

Having decided upon his course of action, Mr. Devine promptly sought out the obsequious Timmins. He found him in the little office connected with the stables.

"Been here some time, haven't you, Timmins?" he suggested.

"Came here as under-groom fifteen years ago, sir."

"Must know the old gentleman fairly well, then?"

"Mr. Hewington, sir?"

"The same."

"Lor', yes, sir. I know him as well as I know myself. And he's a very fine old gentleman, sir, in his way."

"Sure," assented the "Cherub." He had settled back in an office chair and was studying intently the varnished pine ceiling. "But what's his way?" he asked, abruptly.

Timmins looked perplexed.

"Where are his short ribs?" went on Mr. Devine. "What's his strong suit?"

"Oh!" Timmins had translated Mr. Devine's figures of speech. "Well, sir, he's all wrapped up in the Countess Vecchi, sir, him being a widower for so long. Nearly knocked him out when the count turned out to be so bad."

"What ailed the count, anyway?"

"Oh, he was regular wicked, sir; played roulette most of the time. It's an expensive fad, roulette is. Why, they hadn't more'n left the church before he asks the countess for money, and chokes her when she wouldn't get it for him. Yes, sir, he was regular wicked."

"Who made that match, Timmins?"

"Mr. Hewington himself, sir. He was carried away with the idea of his daughter being a countess."

"Banks heavy on society, does he? Do the Hewingtons cut much of a figure now in the giddy whirl?"

"Lor', no, sir. Since they lost their money they've kind of dropped out of it all. It goes hard with the old gentleman, too, sir."

Mr. Devine smoked thoughtfully for several moments before asking: "Any real swell neighbors around here?"

"Lots of 'em, sir. It's a very select neighborhood, sir, as you'll find. Why, just above us are the Wilburs, Knickerbockers, sir. Above them are the Miller-Tremways—youngest daughter married into the Earl of Dippington's family, and was received at court. And next below us are the Wallows, folks that has their own coat of arms, and——"

"Not Nick Walloway?"

"He's the head of the family now, sir, Nicholas is."

"So Nick is a neighbor of mine, is he?"

"But they're very exclusive, the Wallows are, sir. They entertain lots of titled folks. They used to be very friendly here, sir, but none of them's been here now for nearly two years."

"Then it's time they came," declared Mr. Devine. "How about the other folks, the Wilburs and the Tremways?"

"Haven't been here for a long time, either, sir."

"Very thoughtless of them, isn't it? But we'll fix that. Hitch up two or three of those gingersnap horses and take me over to the Walloway place."

"To-day, sir?" Timmins stared his astonishment.

"No, right away."

"But it's—it's Sunday, sir. Begging your pardon for being so bold, sir, but the Wallows don't receive on Sundays, sir, and they've got a bishop there."

"Good! I'm right at home when there's a bishop around. And I'll see about the receiving business. You just attend to the hooking up, Timmins."

It was against all conventions, and Timmins foresaw a most frigid reception awaiting them at the exclusive Wallows. In fact, the Walloway butler, who weighed twice as much as Eppings and was haughtier in proportion, was coldly doubtful as to whether or not Mr. Nicholas Walloway could be seen. He surveyed the Hewington cobs with withering scorn, and glanced with disapproving eye at Mr. Devine's tobacco-brown waistcoat.

"I don't think Mr. Walloway is receiving to-day," he observed.

"Oh, that'll be all right, Fatty," cheerfully remarked Mr. Devine. "You trot along in and tell Nick that 'Cherub' Devine is out here."

The Walloway butler gasped. Timmins trembled in his seat. But the heavens did not fall, the earth did not yawn. Two minutes later Mr. Nicholas Walloway, much perplexed and not a little embarrassed, was escorting Mr. Devine

past the awful presence of the stout butler and into the Walloway mansion.

The "Cherub" had never honored young Mr. Walloway with a social call before, but he had dropped in once or twice at the new offices of Walloway & Co., and his reception had been extremely cordial. In fact, Mr. Nicholas Walloway had felt himself singularly favored, and had said so. For his firm, in spite of the heavy mahogany desks and other expensive office trappings which seemed to proclaim a prosperous stability, was woefully lacking in just such customers as Mr. Devine could be if he chose. To have the handling of some of the "Cherub's" extensive business would establish the firm on a basis where mahogany furniture would be something more than an enterprising presumption.

The "Cherub" had liked Nick Walloway from the start. He had been pleased with the quiet energy of the young aristocrat who had quickly turned his back on his idle friends and set about the work of rehabilitating the family fortunes. But as yet he had not trusted him with any orders.

Mr. Devine assumed that if Mr. Walloway was glad to see him in his office, he would feel the same about welcoming him to his home. This was hardly a safe line of reasoning, but evidently it was not far from right in this instance. At any rate, the "Cherub" took this view.

"Deal?" the "Cherub" was saying. "No, I'm not anxious about any deal; at least, not to-day. But, by the way, I expect your firm will get some orders along about Tuesday. Sure thing! Yes, it is something about P. Z. & N. Heard about that, did you? Well, I'll need you Tuesday. I've had my eye on you for some time, and now that I'm a neighbor of yours—yes, that's right. Got the next place above, Hewington Rods, or Acres, or something."

Young Mr. Walloway appeared greatly astonished to hear this. "Do you mean to say that you own Hewington Acres, 'Cherub'? That you have taken possession? When did you do it?"

"Oh, I bought it a couple of months ago, but I just ran up last night to look the place over. Say, it isn't a bad place, is it, Nick?"

"No, I shouldn't call it bad. Ten years ago there wasn't a finer place on the Sound. But what has become of the Hewingtons?"

"They're there yet, but they don't mingle much with me. They've gone into retreat since I arrived. I'm not in their class, it seems. Say, Nick, I wish you could have heard the countess telling me what she thought of me, last night. You know the countess, of course?"

"Well, rather." Mr. Nicholas Walloway looked a bit uncomfortable for a moment. "I used to know her very well," he continued, "but I haven't seen her since she went abroad and married the count."

"She's a good deal of a hummer, the countess is," suggested the "Cherub." "Not one of your front row Amazons, you know, but a real nice little lady. Plenty of ginger about her, too, I should imagine, if she was stirred up."

Mr. Nicholas Walloway was compelled to smile at this estimate.

"You're not far out of the way, 'Cherub.' All the Hewingtons have been rather high-spirited. She doesn't seem friendly to you, eh?" Mr. Walloway chuckled a little over this.

"No, she doesn't," admitted Mr. Devine. "And say, Nick, I want you to come around and do a little gloom-breaking to-night. Bring the folks with you, too. Guests? Well, lug the guests along. Bishop who? What, the funny little old chap with white side whiskers and an equator like a Broadway cop's? He down here! Say, Nick, that bishop is the real article, he is. Know him! Well, you ask him if he knows 'Cherub' Devine. Tell him I'm expecting him over."

"And say, Nick, just round up a few of the other neighbors for me, will you? Those Wilburs and hyphen Tremways. Bring a mob—the house is big enough. Oh, yes, you can, if you go at it right. They've heard of me. Tell 'em I'm a freak, a curiosity. Anyone staying at

the Tremways? You don't say! Comes from Austria, doesn't he? Well, you tell the Tremways to bring the baron along. Why, the baron and I took the baths together at Baden Two-Times. The baron's all right, too. Oh, he'll remember me.

"Now you fix up a nice little crowd, and have 'em over there by about—say, what's the proper caper for a Sunday night spread?—Ten? Half-past eight! Well, call it eight-thirty, then. But don't leave out any ladies. This is no stag, Nick; it's to be a real swell society affair, and you're master of ceremonies. Oh, you'll do. Yes, I'm going now. Got to shake the wrinkles out of my claw-hammer coat. And, say, I'm going to send your stout friend here"—indicating the ponderous butler—"a bottle of anti-fat. He needs it. So long, Nick."

## VI.

Consternation fell upon Eppings when it occurred to Mr. Devine, along about two o'clock, to inform him that guests were expected at supper.

"Beg pardon, sir, but it is impossible, sir. We are not prepared. There's only a small filet in the house, sir, and not a duck, not a single duck."

"Have squab, then."

"But, sir, we haven't—"

"Oh, don't go on telling me what you haven't got. Hash up anything. Make some sandwiches, if you can't do better. Only don't come to me with your troubles. I'm no *chef*. But I'm going to have some friends here to-night, and I shall expect you to feed them; that's what you're here for, isn't it?"

"Ye-e-es, sir. At what hour, sir?"

"Eight-thirty, sharp."

"And how—how many plates, sir?"

"I don't know; ten or fifteen or twenty. Better make it twenty, and then you can discard."

"I'll do my best, sir."

"That's the way to talk, Eppings."

Having made these offhand preparations, Mr. Devine sat himself down on the veranda to contemplate the unfamiliar prospect of many trees, a sweep

of intensely green lawn and a wonderfully blue afternoon sky. He was quite satisfied with himself. Had he been in the habit of grinning, he would have done so then. But Mr. Devine seldom indulged in a grin. When fortune smiled on him he merely accepted it as the usual order, and regarded the end of his cigar with thoughtful admiration. It was only when misfortune threatened that the "Cherub" laughed insolently in its face.

He allowed himself to reflect, however, that the Hewingtons would soon be discovering that he was not exactly a social outcast. He was lingering fondly over this thought when he heard a step on the veranda, and looked up to see before him the aristocratic figure of the Countess Vecchi's father. Mr. Hewington seemed somewhat agitated.

"You must pardon me, sir, for a seeming impertinence," he began, "but I have just learned by accident that you contemplate giving a party here to-night. Is it a fact?"

Mr. Devine nodded. "Just a few friends, a dozen or so."

"Ah! Friends of yours?" Mr. Hewington gave the words a significant emphasis. "Then would it not be—prudent—perhaps discreet is the better word—for my daughter to go elsewhere for the night; to the hotel in the village, perhaps?"

There was a twinkle in the "Cherub's" blue eyes as he responded: "Afraid of a rough house, are you?"

"My daughter, sir, is not exactly accustomed to—er—the kind of persons who might—"

"Oh, I see. Well, suit yourself about it; suit yourself. But it isn't at all necessary. I shall try to keep them quiet. There are to be only a few neighbors, the Walloways and—"

"The Walloways!"

"Yes, and the Wilburs and the Miller-Tremways, and old Bishop Horton, and a stray baron or two."

"Bishop Horton! Is Bishop Horton coming? Coming here?"

The "Cherub" took occasion to view leisurely Mr. Hewington's astonishment.



"Why, yes. The bishop's a friend of mine. Know him, do you?"

"We were college classmates, Mr. Devine," said Mr. Hewington, impressively.

"That so! I never went to college with the bishop, but I've crossed the ocean with him twice, and once I held his hat while he made a speech."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Hewington.

"Think so? It may seem a little queer to you, but the bishop doesn't appear to look at it that way. Come down and meet him and the rest of the folks, won't you? We're to have a little supper about half-past eight. And, say, bring the countess; that is, unless you're afraid of the crowd."

This last was a violation of a paragraph in the "Cherub's" own code of ethics, a paragraph which read: "When the other fellow's down and out, don't rub it in." But the words had escaped before he knew it. Fortunately, Mr. Hewington did not seem to notice the allusion, for he retired, repeating in an undertone: "The Wallows! Bishop Horton! The Miller-Tremways!"

Mr. Devine complacently awaited the result of this diplomatic stroke. He had small doubt as to what that result would be. The effect of his announcement to Mr. Hewington was evident. Nor did he have any misgivings that Nick Walloway might fail to carry out his part of the program.

And sure enough, early in the evening the big rooms of the great house began to echo with the lively chatter of many guests. There was the portly Mrs. Walloway, whose dinner dances are always such brilliant affairs; there were the haughty Wilburs, the hypenated Tremways, and a half dozen others, without whose names and pictures the Sunday supplements would be incomplete.

They were somewhat disposed to look curiously upon Mr. "Cherub" Devine at first, but when the bishop had patted him affectionately on the shoulder, and the baron had effusively embraced him, the atmosphere thawed perceptibly.

"Isn't he unique? So charmingly

naïve!" whispered Mrs. Miller-Tremway.

"Perfectly delightful!" assented Mrs. Wilbur. "He says such odd things."

"So glad you're to be a neighbor of ours," the latter assured Mr. Devine. "And how do you like Hewington Acres?"

"Oh, it's a good deal like living in Central Park," observed the "Cherub"; "grass looks as if it had had a shave, a hair-cut and a shampoo, you know. All the place lacks are some benches and nurses and baby carriages. I may have to bring those up here until I get used to it."

"Just fancy!" gurgled Mrs. Wilbur. "Then you have not had a country place before?"

"Me! Why, I never owned a foot of ground before in my life. All I've ever had has been trunks."

"But now that he's begun buying real estate," put in Nick Walloway, "there's no telling where he will stop. I shouldn't be surprised if he owned a whole State by New Year."

"Is it true, Mr. Devine," demanded Mrs. Walloway, "that you started on your financial career with only a few thousand dollars?"

"Few thousand!" echoed the "Cherub." "Why, I've seen the time when it would have made me dizzy just to think of having a whole thousand."

"Do tell us about it, Mr. Devine," urged Mrs. Wilbur, adjusting her lorgnette.

"Go ahead, 'Cherub,' I want to hear that yarn, too," seconded Nick Walloway. "That was before you came East, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that was in Chicago," said the "Cherub." "I began as office boy and drew down the princely salary of three dollars a week."

"And you lived on that!" Mrs. Wilbur peered at him curiously.

"Yes, and saved two of it every week for ten months."

"To send to a widowed mother?" suggested Mrs. Miller-Tremway.

"Not quite. I didn't have any widowed mother or anyone else to look after. I was saving to go into business

for myself. There was a pie and coffee stand around the corner from our office, and I had my eye on that. I thought it would be a fine thing to sell pie and coffee and be my own boss. So I got the fellow's price for the outfit. He wanted seventy-five dollars, and it seemed to me as though he'd asked for enough to pay off the national debt.

"I had apartments in the sub-cellar of an office building that winter, and I paid my rent by shoveling ashes every morning. There wasn't any ruddy duck on my bill of fare those days. For luncheon I used to go out and look at the pie stand and draw in a long breath. But I saved the seventy-five and a few dollars more for a sinking fund.

"Then I resigned. I rather expected the firm to go under when they got that blow. They didn't, though. The junior member looked as if he had heard good news from home when I broke it to him, but all he said was: 'Say, hang this up as you go out,' and he handed me one of those 'Boy Wanted' signs.

"That wasn't all that was coming to me that day, either. When I went around to the pie and coffee man with my seventy-five, he laughed and told me to brush by. His sales had jumped ten pies a day, and he had put his price up to an even hundred. For about five minutes things looked to me as the wash does when they get too much blueing in the tub. Then I braced up and squandered fifty cents on the first real feed I'd had for a year.

"After that it was sunrise again. I drifted into a place where they were selling dollar options on July wheat, and the first thing I knew I was plunging like a porpoise. Inside of two hours I had almost three hundred dollars in my pocket, and I knew how a Rothschild feels. I went back to the stand, shook my roll at the pie butcher, and did a lot of other fool things, all meant to show the folks that I was it.

"Next day I hunted up a regular broker and began to speculate, nice and proper, on margins. I hadn't been at that more than a week before I hit the market right—and I've been hitting it ever since—except when it's hit me.

What's that, Eppings? Oh! Come on, folks; let's see what the cook has found in the ice-box."

Probably the Wilburs and the Miller-Tremways had never been summoned to dine in just that fashion before. Perhaps the novelty pleased them, for they were in high good humor. They told each other that Mr. Devine was delightfully original. But two of them, Nick Walloway and the bishop, knew that it was only the "Cherub's" amazing audacity which had prompted such speeches.

For Mr. Devine was in his most audacious mood. He had been talking for the purpose of delaying the supper announcement, in the hope that Mr. Hewington and the countess would appear. But in vain he watched the door. With a cherubic smile, he saw his carefully laid plan go to smash.

In spite of Eppings' fears, it was a very creditable supper, but Mr. Devine took no note of it. He was thinking about the countess. Yet apparently he was at his best. Mrs. Miller-Tremway even forgot that her son-in-law was the brother of an earl, and laughed as she used to laugh before the Tremway mines began to pay the dividends which had inspired the hyphen.

It was toward the close of the affair that the bishop took Mr. Devine one side and asked: "Do you know what has become of the Hewingtons?"

"Sure," said the "Cherub." "They're all upstairs in retreat."

"In retreat! What do you mean, Devine?"

"It's because of me, you know. They don't approve of me. Mr. Hewington's writing a book about my wicked ways; gets his material from the newspapers. It'll be a thick book, I guess."

"Now, if that isn't just like De Courcey!" exclaimed the bishop. "Splendid fellow, though, in his way."

"So I've heard."

"If you don't mind, Devine, I'll run up and see him for a few minutes before I go."

"Oh, help yourself. They're somewhere on the top floor behind a barricade."



"I'll bring him out of that," said the bishop. But he had not reckoned on the full strength of Mr. Hewington's prejudice.

"It's not on my own account, my dear bishop," said Mr. Hewington, "but I must guard my daughter from such association."

"Nonsense, De Courcey! Devine lacks polish, perhaps, but at heart he is an honest chap. Come down and meet him and bring Adèle."

"No, no, I couldn't think of it," firmly responded Mr. Hewington. "We shall remain here until he goes away." So the bishop went back alone.

When it was over, when the last of them had gone, Mr. "Cherub" Devine, groping about for some fitting term to express the situation, remarked enigmatically:

"That's what I call playing a four flush against a full house. Guess I'll take another stack, though."

Which meant that the audacious soul of Mr. Devine was humbled but not crushed. He had failed, but he would try again.

## VII.

Among other urban habits which Mr. Devine had long since acquired was that of keeping late hours. Hence, although it lacked a half hour of midnight, and the big rooms of Hewington Acres were empty and very quiet, the "Cherub" was still sitting in the library, smoking and meditating. He had a trick, when watching an unsteady market, of tearing pieces of paper into small bits and throwing them away. He was doing this now, and the Eastern rug under his feet looked as if it had been visited by a stage snowstorm, while an unlucky volume of Emerson's essays had lost a half dozen pages from the very middle of the book.

The net result of this reverie was that once more Mr. Devine was considering a retreat to the city. Right in the midst of it he was aroused by an odd noise. It sounded as if some one was dragging a heavy object down the stairs.

Looking out through the door hangings, he saw the Countess Vecchi tug-

ging at a dress-suit case which was evidently well filled. She was dressed as if for the street, with a light silk dust-coat over her black gown and a jaunty straw hat on her head. When she saw the "Cherub" she seemed startled and shrank back guiltily.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I—I did not expect to find you here."

"I would guess that much," said the "Cherub," and added cheerfully, with a glance at the suit case: "Traveling?"

"I am going away."

"Are you? Do you generally start alone and in the middle of the night?" The "Cherub" had walked out into the hall and was looking curiously at her.

The Countess Vecchi, allowing the suit case to slide to the floor, faced him resolutely. There was a hint of suppressed agitation in her tone, and her brown eyes looked as if they might fill with tears at any moment.

"Mr. Devine," she said, with the air of one who makes a crushing revelation, "I have found out all about it."

"Have you, though! Might I ask about what?"

"About you."

"Me!"

"Yes. I know the whole meaning of your presence in this house, and why you stay here."

"Good! You know a whole lot more about it than I do, then."

"It is useless for you to try to keep up the deceit any longer, Mr. Devine. My father has confessed the whole wretched story. He told me at first that you were merely here on some law business, but when I heard that you were entertaining your friends here, just as you would in your own house, I demanded to be told the truth. And now I know. This is your house. You own it. Somehow or other, you have tricked my poor father out of it and now our beautiful home is yours. You are wicked and cruel. I hate you! You—you are——"

Just what else he was the astonished "Cherub" was never to know, for at that point the threatening flood submerged the brown eyes. The countess, sinking on the bottom stair, leaned

against the carved newel post and sobbed tempestuously into the ample sleeves of the silk coat.

Feeling about as helpless as a man who has started a machine which he does not know how to control, Mr. Devine stood staring at her. Several times and very earnestly he requested her to stop it. But the countess appeared to have no idea of stopping.

Finally there came to him an inspiration. Lifting up his voice, he called for Eppings. Then the sobbing ceased. Springing to her feet, the countess held up a warning hand.

"Don't, Mr. Devine. I don't want Eppings."

"I want him, though, or your father. Perhaps I'd better get your father."

"No, no! I forbid you to call my father. He is asleep. Eppings is asleep. They are all asleep—and I am going away."

With this she marched past him, as dignified as was possible under the circumstances, for she was hampered by the heavy suit case. Stupidly the "Cherub" watched her until she reached the veranda. Then, catching up an opera hat and a rain coat, he dashed after her.

"See here," he said, "I don't suppose I can stop you, but I can go along to see that nothing happens to you."

"I do not wish for your company, Mr. Devine."

"I suppose you don't, but I'm going, just the same. You'd better let me carry that bag."

The offer was ignored, and the repulsed "Cherub" fell back a pace. Thus they started down the narrow, graveled path which wound a leisurely course in and out among the shrubbery toward the main road.

It was one of those moist, sultry nights which belong to August, but which sometimes come in early September. Low in the east the stars were shining, but the western sky was so black that the dark trees melted into it.

Not swiftly, not with much grace of motion, but with dogged persistence, the Countess Vecchi fearlessly plunged into the darkness. Just behind came the

"Cherub," following blindly, and angrily chewing the end of an unlighted cigar.

Where were they going, and why? Insistently he asked himself these things. Why did he not do something to arrest the development of this idiotic adventure instead of trotting along behind like a docile pug dog? But he felt as utterly unable to cope with the situation as if he had been a man in a dream. Here was the Countess Vecchi wandering out at midnight to go tramping along a country road, with goodness only knew what destination in view. Also here he was, a full-grown man and the cause of it all, allowing her to do it.

The gates of Hewington Acres had been left behind, and now they were on the broad macadam road. They were going somewhere into the night, but just where he could not guess, for he had lost all sense of direction by this time. Before him the countess trudged steadily on. He could hear the squeak of the suit-case handle as she swung the heavy bag from side to side. Occasionally there was a dull thump as she bumped it awkwardly against her knees. At last a low grumble of distant thunder caused her to halt and glance anxiously over her shoulder at the inky sky.

"There, it's going to rain, you see!" said the "Cherub," reproachfully. "We'd better go back right away."

"You may go back whenever you like," suggested the countess.

"But where are you going? What are you going to do when you get there? Why are you going? Say, let's stop and talk it over."

The countess wearily dropped the bag, and turned abruptly to say: "Mr. Devine, I do not care to discuss my plans with you at all. I am going on."

"All right, then; but I'm going to carry that bag," announced the "Cherub," firmly, "and I shall follow you until I see you safe somewhere, even if I have to walk all night. But it's just nonsense, your starting off like this to ramble about the country in the middle of the night. It's as dark as a pocket. We'll lose our way and fall into things. It's going to shower, too. There! That

thunder is coming nearer. You'll get wet and take cold and maybe you'll die. I never heard of such foolishness. I don't believe you know where you're going, anyway. Why can't you be sensible and go back home before it begins to rain?"

To these protests the countess answered only by a shrug of impatience and by reaching for the suit case. The "Cherub," however, grabbed it first. With another shrug she resumed her way and Mr. Devine, burdened with a coat on one arm and the bag in his other hand, took up a position at her side. Thus they proceeded in silence.

The growling of thunder grew more distinct and the lightning flashes more frequent. As her face was lighted by the flashes he glanced expectantly at her, hoping that she would show some signs of alarm. But her thin lips were tightly closed and her chin was held high and firm. One would never guess from its soft curves that the owner had so much pluck. He began to admire her grit and courage. What an amazing young woman she was! He wished she had taken less baggage, though. The suit case was getting to be exasperatingly cumbersome. What had she stuffed it with, anyway? Rocks?

He began to speculate as to how much further she meant to go. It was likely that they were headed for the village, but it seemed as if they had come miles and miles. Once or twice he caught a glimpse of houses, their dark masses looming black and inhospitable behind hedges and trees. Yes, she must be making for the village. But the hotel, if there was one, would be closed.

A brisk breeze sprang up. The tree tops began to rock and sway like drunken men. Several sharp crashes of thunder came in quick succession and the bare highway emerged at intervals with startling vividness. Then came a hush. Big drops of rain fell with menacing impact on the crown of the "Cherub's" opera hat.

"There! I told you it was going to rain," he announced. "Hold on, now, I'm going to put this coat on you."

The countess hesitated. He had

dropped the bag and was holding up the coat. Another and fiercer flash revealed him with photographic distinctness. She could not help noting that he looked very well in evening dress. He did not seem so much inclined to stoutness as he had in a business suit. She could even see a rain drop sparkling on his shirt bosom. This suggested possibilities.

"No, you need the coat yourself," she said. The big drops were coming faster now. They struck through the thin silk coat coldly on her arms.

"Will you put this coat on," he demanded, shaking it by way of emphasis, "or shall I throw it away?"

Then she allowed him to help her into it.

"Come on," he said, picking up the suit case and starting ahead. The leadership, it seemed, had changed hands. Now it was the countess who followed. The thunderstorm was developing finely. Crash followed crash. The rain was drumming a roaring tattoo on the crown of his hat. The straw affair on her head had lost much of its jauntiness. The smooth surface of the macadam became as slippery as a greased plank.

"You must take my arm or you'll fall," ordered the "Cherub." Meekly she obeyed and they went plunging and sliding through the storm.

"Oh, you're being drenched! You are wet through, aren't you?" shouted the countess in his ear.

"Not quite," he answered, calmly. "Come on."

"But you will be drenched in a minute," she insisted. "I know you will," and she tugged at his arm as if to impress upon him the obvious fact.

"Well, what of it?"

"Oh, it's all my fault, it's all my fault!"

"No, it isn't. It's all mine. You wouldn't have started if I hadn't given that fool party. It's my own fault that I'm here. Besides, I don't mind getting wet. I like it."

For many minutes they continued the conversation on these lines. Mainly they shouted at each other, for the wind and the rain and the thunder made a

grand hubbub about them. She was clinging very tightly to his arm, her chin almost resting on his shoulder. Once, when she was either buffeted against him or made a misstep, she found herself clasping him with both arms.

"I—I beg your pardon," she stammered.

"What?" he roared down at her.

"I—beg—your—pardon!" She fairly shrieked this into his ear, for the thunder was doing its best to drown her voice.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. A succeeding flash showed her that his face, in spite of the coursing rivulets of rain, wore an expression of great contentment.

At last, after sliding and stumbling along for another period, they discovered several houses near the road.

"This is the village, isn't it?" queried the "Cherub." "Is this where we want to go?"

"I suppose so," said the countess.

"But where? Whereabouts in the village?"

"The railroad station."

The "Cherub" echoed these words as if he had never heard them before. "What do you want to go there for?"

"Because I'm going away," said the countess, drearily.

Nothing could be more logical, of course, yet somehow the "Cherub" felt that it was a ridiculous answer. When they reached it he saw with joy that it was one of those low, wide-roofed affairs, under whose eaves they could at least find shelter from the pelting rain.

The station was dark and all the doors were locked, of course, but there was a baggage truck onto which he helped the countess. Rhythmically the rain beat on the tiled roof and gushed merrily from the copper leaders, but none of it could reach them. The "Cherub" shook the water from the soaked brim of his opera hat. Then he paced up and down before the truck on which the limp figure of the countess leaned wretchedly. She must be cheered up, he decided.

"Well, this is something like, isn't it?"

Great, eh?" he asked. At every step his shoes made a slushing sound. "Little tired, aren't you? But now you can rest; you can rest while we're waiting for the train, you know. What time do we get a train, anyway?"

"There's one at half-past seven."

"What! Half-past seven in the morning?"

"Yes, that's the first one."

"Look here," said the "Cherub," leaning against the truck and peering through the gloom at the countess earnestly, "you don't mean to stay here until half-past seven, do you?"

"I—I don't know," she responded, weakly. "I did when I started, but—but I'm tired now and wet and—oh, I wish I hadn't come at all, I wish I hadn't."

"There, there!" said the "Cherub," patting her on the shoulder soothingly. "Don't you worry. I'll go and rout out some one and get a team to take us back."

"Please don't leave me here alone, Mr. Devine; please don't!" She grasped his hand and clung to it tightly.

"All right, we'll go together and find some one. See, it isn't raining nearly so hard as it was. I think the shower must be almost over. Shall we start now?"

The countess was quite ready. There was a livery stable just across from the station, she said. Fortunately, they found a night hostler dozing in the office. It was with difficulty, however, that he could be induced to harness a pair of horses. His chief desire seemed to be to gaze at the dripping clothes of Mr. Devine.

"Look as if you'd been in swimmin'," he commented, surveying the "Cherub" with appreciative eye, from the soggy shoes to the shapeless linen rag which had once been a collar.

"Yes, that's the way I feel, too, but you hustle with that team and we'll talk about the way I look afterward," said the "Cherub."

The drive back to Hewington Acres was silent and uneventful. Wrapped in two lap robes the countess occupied the rear seat. Mr. Devine sat with the

driver. He was wet and thoughtful, and frequently he glanced solicitously toward the still figure on the rear seat.

As they neared the house they saw that it was brightly illuminated. Out through the open front doors streamed a broad pathway of light across which figures were moving. One of these was Mr. Hewington. He was walking up and down, his hands clinched and his chin sunk on his chest. At the sound of carriage wheels he started toward the door.

"Adèle!" he exclaimed, with much dramatic fervor, as he saw the countess, and stretched out his arms to receive her. Promptly she began to sob on his shoulder.

Next appeared the soggy clothed "Cherub" with the suit case.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, throwing down the bag. Then, turning to the gaping butler: "Eppings, see if you can find me a dry cigar and a match."

"Mr. Devine," thundered Mr. Hewington, "I demand an explanation."

"Well, what do you want me to explain; that the rain is wet?" returned the "Cherub."

"This is no time for levity, sir. Adèle, go with Marie." Mr. Hewington disengaged himself from the countess and strode threateningly toward Mr. Devine.

"The poor darling!" murmured the stout Mrs. Timmins, from the background, glancing from the countess to glare at the "Cherub."

"I want you to explain your astounding conduct, sir," said Mr. Hewington.

At this moment Eppings created a diversion by coming in with a box of cigars and a lighted taper.

"Ah, thank you, Eppings," Mr. Devine indulged in two or three luxuriant puffs before replying. "Now, don't you be in a hurry, Mr. Hewington, and we'll clear up this little mystery in no time."

"Little mystery, sir!" The tall figure of Mr. Hewington stiffened with anger. "What do you mean, sir? I wake up in the middle of the night to find that my daughter has fled. I arouse Eppings to learn that he left you at eleven o'clock waiting for her in the library. I dis-

cover that you are both gone. And now, at this time in the morning, you come back in a public carriage. You are a wretch, Mr. Devine, a scheming, villainous——"

"Stop, father, stop! This is too absurd!" The Countess Vecchi had broken away from Marie and stepped between the two men. "It was all my fault. I was running away, and Mr. Devine tried to stop me, and when I wouldn't be stopped he went with me and carried the bag. Then it rained and he got wet. And he brought me back from the village when I was tired, too. He has behaved splendidly. Don't you dare call him any more names! He is splendid, splendid—and he is very wet."

"I'm wet, all right," commented the "Cherub," looking ruefully down at the little pool of water which had leaked from his clothes on the polished floor of the hall.

"Sure, he is wet," assented Mrs. Timmins, solemnly.

Mr. Hewington's stern gaze changed to a puzzled stare. "I don't understand, Adèle, just what explanation there is in Mr. Devine's being wet. I want to know why he induced you to run away with him?"

"But he didn't, father. He tried to stop me and he made me wear his coat and so he got wet. He may take cold and die. See, he is dripping even now."

In a dazed manner, Mr. Hewington inspected once more the obviously damp condition of Mr. Devine's raiment.

"Yes, yes, Adèle; I suppose it is all right, but it is not yet clear in my mind."

The "Cherub" was not inclined to continue the dialogue.

"Oh, we'll straighten all that out in the morning, Mr. Hewington. Just now I would advise you to see that the countess is taken care of. She is tired and almost as wet as I am."

A moment later the chimes of a French clock announced the hour of three.

"Three o'clock!" exclaimed the "Cherub." "I don't believe you'll catch that seven-thirty train, will you, countess?"

She had started up the stairs, but she turned to smile and shake her head at him. It was a friendly smile.

Five minutes afterward, as he began the task of shedding his soggy clothing, the "Cherub" caught sight of himself in a mirror. Regarding the disreputable reflection whimsically, he observed: "You would give a party, would you? All on your own hook, too! And see what happened to you!"

A hot bath, however, melted his cynicism. Having routed a chill and finished his cigar, he regained his buoyancy of soul. The evening had not been entirely a failure. No, he distinctly recalled that she had smiled at him. It had been a friendly smile, too. And this was his last drowsy thought as he settled himself comfortably for a five-hour nap.

### VIII.

"But why should I stay here? Why do you want me to stay?"

The countess was asking Mr. Devine these questions with as much sincerity as if there could be no possible reason why he should object to her leaving Hewington Acres.

"Why—why, because you ought to, because I want you to stay. Don't you see? I want you to stay."

For the better part of the day the "Cherub" had been waiting for just this opportunity. Now that it had come, he stood staring at her with a blank, baffled look in his blue eyes.

The countess glanced curiously at him and then turned away with a light laugh.

"Do you think those are very good reasons, Mr. Devine?"

He had found her in her favorite retreat, a rustic summerhouse perched on a little point of rocks which jutted out into the Sound and marked the eastern boundary of the estate. She had been examining some papers from a japanned document box, but she hastily put them away when she saw him approaching.

The countess showed no ill effects from her midnight walk in the rain, nor did she evince any inclination to review the adventure. It was when the "Cherub" had said that he hoped she had

given up her idea of running away that she asked him why she should stay.

Seeing that his case needed strengthening, Mr. Devine prepared for the effort.

"Look here," he said, argumentatively, "you don't think that I came up here to drive you out of your home, do you? It will amount to that if you insist on leaving. The place is big enough to hold all of us, isn't it? Why not stay here for a while, anyway?"

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Devine, I'm sure, but I don't feel that I can accept such a favor from—well, from a stranger, you know."

"We'll get acquainted, then."

But the countess firmly held to the point. Hewington Acres was no longer her home; therefore she must leave it at once.

"Perhaps it is mine, but I don't want the place," urged the "Cherub." "I just bought it for a joke. I'll tell you what I'm going to do, I'm going to sell it back to your father. I'll let it go cheap for the sake of getting rid of it."

The countess shook her head at this proposal. "Father could not buy it back," she said.

"Or I may rent it to him."

"No, we must go away somewhere and get another home, a home of our own." There came into the voice of the countess a little quaver which made Mr. Devine feel that he had done a harsh and cruel thing.

"I believe it's just because I am here that you're in such a hurry to go. If I should clear out now and not come back until—"

"No, no," protested the countess. "I shouldn't feel like staying a minute after you had gone, not a minute. While you are here I am, in a way, your guest; but if you were not here I should not have even that standing."

"Then I'll stay," declared the "Cherub." "I'll stay here a week, a month, any time."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," quickly replied the countess. "I have seen stock speculators before. They are just as much slaves of the market as the wretched men who haunt the gambling



halls of Monte Carlo are slaves of the roulette wheel. No, you will be back in Wall Street to-morrow morning, eager for the game. It is all you live for—speculation, speculation! And, after all, it's only gambling on a big scale. No, you will go back in the morning and by noon you will have forgotten that any such person as my poor self ever existed."

The "Cherub" was dumb before this outburst. It had been so unexpected.

"Of course, I have no right to say such things to you," she continued, more soberly. "I did not intend to say them, either. You have been very kind to us, and I—I admire you in many ways. But you should not have tried to make me believe too much. I am not a silly schoolgirl, you know. I—I have had one experience with a man who was"—she hesitated at the confession—"who was a gambler."

She had turned to hide the sudden flush that crept into her cheeks. Suppressed emotion was gently shaking her shoulders.

As in a flash "Cherub" Devine knew exactly what he wanted to do now, and it was only by claspings his hands resolutely behind his back that he kept from taking her in his arms and otherwise making a spectacle of himself. He saw it all. Even if she did despise him, he was in love with the Countess Vecchi.

The revelation came with stunning abruptness, like the glimpses of flooded roadway when the lightning had illuminated their way last night. Yes, he loved her. Promptly the "Cherub" blushed. The next moment, however, he went pale and held his breath. Could she suspect? Could she read it in his looks? Had she known it before he knew it himself? Women were so acute in these matters, he had heard. He hardly dared risk a glance to see if she knew.

If she should know! He was fairly appalled at his own audacity. Suppose she should be at this moment making the discovery which he had just made? Would she shrink away from him in terror, or would she laugh scornfully at him? For the "Cherub" it was a mo-

ment of tremendous suspense which lasted until he nerved himself to look at the countess. She was sticking a long silver hatpin through the top of her hat and listlessly watching the dingy sails of a coasting schooner that was crawling up the Sound. He breathed more freely. She did not know, then.

"There, you'll forgive me, will you not?" she said, turning so quickly toward him that he started guiltily. "I didn't mean to lecture you, really I didn't. And now I must say good-by."

"You—must—say—good-by!" He repeated the words dully.

"Why, yes, I have decided to go to town to-night. I shall ask you to let Timmins drive me to the station this time. You will not go until morning, I suppose."

"But I can't let you go away in this fashion. I don't want you to go at all; there's no need for it."

"You said that before. We've settled all that, you know."

The countess pierced her hat with still another silver pin and picked up the jannaped box.

"We hadn't settled it, though," eagerly protested the "Cherub." "You said you wouldn't think of staying after I went back, because there wouldn't be any host, didn't you?"

"Yes, it was something like that."

"And then I said I'd stay. Well, I meant it. I want you to see that I did. You can wait a day or two, until we make some arrangement. You haven't any particular place to go to, have you?"

"There are lots of hotels in New York," suggested the countess.

"Hotels! Do you suppose we're going to let you run off to New York alone?"

"We?"

"Yes; your father and I. We have had a little talk about you."

"You and my father!" The countess seemed incredulous.

"Yes. We were talking over a business matter, something about the terms on which he was to keep this place, and then we got to talking about you."

"Why, you—you surprise me, Mr.

Devine. I had no idea that my father ever consulted you."

The "Cherub" smiled complacently. "He has, though. You're thinking of what he said last night when we came back from the village. But he didn't know how things stood then. We had an understanding this morning and we agreed that we would try to make you see how foolish it was to run away. Hasn't he said anything about it?"

"Nothing that has influenced my plans."

"But you can see how I feel about it, can't you?" Mr. Devine flushed at his unfortunate wording of this appeal. What he was trying to do most was to conceal his real feelings. But he plunged boldly ahead with his argument. "That's why I am going to stay here until you have promised to be reasonable," was his closing declaration.

"Indeed!" A man with such deep knowledge of womankind as the "Cherub" thought he possessed would have detected a note of challenge in her tone. Mr. Devine, however, thought that he was managing the affair very cleverly, when she continued: "I suppose I may have time to think it over, if I am to reconsider?"

"Of course, all the time you want," he assented, readily.

The countess paused as if about to announce that she had already changed her mind. Then she looked up quickly and replied:

"This is Monday, isn't it? Well, by Wednesday night I shall probably be able to tell you exactly what I mean to do; that is, providing I am still here."

"But you can wait two days, can't you?"

"Yes, I can if you can."

Then the "Cherub" understood. She meant to take him at his word and hold him to it. Although he thought of many things which might happen to P. Z. & N. if for two whole days his watchful eyes should be taken from it, he did not flinch.

"I'm game," he said. "We will watch each other. I'll stay to see that you don't wander off among strangers with a hundred-pound suit case, and you look

out that I don't rush off to Wall Street to indulge my supposed mania for gambling."

Thus the pact was made between them; and they went back to the house for dinner.

## IX.

The clanging of a big gong announces the daily openings of the New York Stock Exchange. During five years there had never been a morning when "Cherub" Devine was not to be found within earshot of that gong when it rang in Wall Street's brief but tumultuous day. He was to be found waiting with calm confidence whatever crisis, big or little, might arise, and generally there was something of the sort.

Yet here he was at opening hour on this post-holiday Tuesday morning, only vaguely conscious that he was miles away from it all. If he remembered, it was only the troublesome thought of a moment. What did he care if a thousand gongs were ringing to open a thousand stock exchanges? They might stay open forever or close for good and all; he was helping the Countess Vecchi toss bits of sweet crackers to a pair of white swans.

When the dignified birds forgot their stately manners and squabbled over the tidbits, the countess laughed. Especially charming when she laughed was the Countess Vecchi. Absurd little wrinkles appeared on her nose and a spot of color showed through the clear skin under either eye. A low, tripping laugh it was, with a slight quaver in it, like a tremolo organ note. Also, she had an odd little way of holding her head to one side and looking up at you when she laughed.

These were recent discoveries of the "Cherub's." He had made them unaided in one short forenoon as he accompanied the countess on a voyage of discovery about Hewington Acres. He was immensely pleased that he had made them. Possibly he could not have told you much about the various natural beauties which had been pointed out to him, but he could have discoursed en-



thusiastically and at length on certain graces possessed by the countess.

Perhaps it was the clean, crisp September air, perhaps it was something else, which caused the "Cherub" to feel within him a new glow and thrill of mere existence. He himself did not entirely understand the origin of this feeling, but he had no inclination to analyze it. He was glad he was there. Especially he was glad that the countess was there, too. Beyond that nothing was to be desired.

Thus it happened that the advent of a red-headed boy on a bicycle seemed almost an impertinence. The boy dropped his wheel on the lawn, pulled a thin, black book from his pocket, and held out a yellow envelope to Mr. Devine.

"Message for you," announced the boy.

"Honest!" said the "Cherub." "Aren't you joking?"

"The funeral-faced duck up to the house said it was for you," insisted the boy.

"Funeral-faced duck? Countess, do you recognize that word-painting of Eppings? Well, young man, you take that precious message back to the house, chuck it on the porch, and get Eppings to sign. Here's a dollar; one-quarter for delivery charges, three for the word-painting."

He of the red hair grinned expansively and retired. For another delicious period they threw pieces of sweet crackers to the swans. Then the boy came back on his bicycle.

"Prepaid reply message!" was his second announcement.

"You're not fooling again, are you?" queried Mr. Devine, quizzically. "Say, you can write, can't you?"

"Yep."

"Want to earn another dollar?"

"Yep."

"Here it is, then. Chuck this message where you put the other one and tell whoever sent it that I'm very busy, or sick abed, or gone fishing—anything you think best—and sign it yourself."

This time the red-haired boy's grin was still more expansive as he pedaled jowously away.

"You don't seem greatly interested in your telegrams, Mr. Devine," observed the countess. "I thought that telegrams always meant something important."

"Not this kind; I'll read them Thursday morning. Isn't there some place we can go where that boy can't find us again?"

"There's the garden. And you haven't seen the dahlias yet, have you?"

As a matter of fact, Mr. Devine did not know whether he had seen the dahlias or not. He wondered if they ran on four legs, or had feathers. But he declared that he hadn't seen them and wanted to, so they were soon threading the intricate winding pathways where tall cannas flaunted their green and scarlet and the asters blazed like colored stars. An hour later, when they returned to the house, they found the red-haired boy perched on the horse block.

"Three more!" he announced, producing his book. "And they all want rush answers."

"Good!" said Mr. Devine. "Give me your book a minute."

On the receipt blank he wrote "Refused" opposite his name.

"There! That ought to be almost as good as cutting the wires, hadn't it, sonny?"

"Guess that'll do the trick," observed the boy.

He of the red hair was correct, too. No more messages were sent up from the village, and Mr. Devine's afternoon was undisturbed, being devoted to making the impressive discovery that the Countess Vecchi's brown eyes were most interesting to watch.

Wednesday morning arrived in some miraculously abrupt fashion. It found them sitting in a sunny corner of the library. The "Cherub" was smoking one of his fat, black cigars, by special request of the countess, and he was regarding with approving eyes her slim white fingers as they employed an ivory needle in the fashioning of some utterly useless affair that looked like a lot of holes edged with spider webs.

This was hardly the "Cherub" Devine of popular conception, you see. Yet he

appeared highly content with himself and with the peaceful domestic surroundings. Between the countess and Mr. Devine had gradually evolved that comfortable understanding which makes conversation a thing to be dispensed with at will. There were many things which he wanted to say to her at some time or other, but now it was sufficient just to look at her.

She was wearing some kind of a house gown, with lace falling alluringly away from her white neck and rounded arms. Somehow or other the "Cherub" felt that he was enjoying a rare privilege. He was inclined to accept the gift humbly and in silence, fearful lest it be taken suddenly away from him.

And then came Eppings to announce the presence of Mr. Nicholas Walloway, adding that his errand was urgent and important.

"Nick Walloway, eh? You don't mind if I have him come in here, do you?" he asked of the countess. Mr. Devine's motive in this was selfish. He would show Nick just how he was being blessed.

"Perhaps I had better take my work into another room," suggested the countess, starting to rise.

"No, no, don't disturb the cobwebs. Nick's business isn't half so important as he thinks it is. Bring him right in, Eppings."

But Mr. Nicholas Walloway was inclined to retreat when he discovered the presence of the Countess Vecchi.

"You must forgive me, Devine, for hunting you up like this, but I thought I ought to do it. It's a matter of business; couldn't we—" And he looked suggestively at the door.

"I haven't any office here, Nick, and this room is as good as any other. You mustn't mind, countess; any business I do to-day will not take long."

"But—" began Mr. Walloway.

"Oh, let's have it, Nick. Bottom dropped out of something?" The "Cherub" was smiling amiably.

"I rather think you would have thought so if you had been on the floor just before closing yesterday. The

Bates-Rimmer crowd is after P. Z. & N. I believe they mean to gobble it up."

"Ah, that gang, eh?" This time the "Cherub" showed his white teeth when he smiled.

"They began it as soon as they found you were not on deck, and they've been at it ever since. Your brokers nearly had a fit when they couldn't find you anywhere around town. They had ten clerks out looking for you."

"Got nervous, did they?"

"Nervous! Why, man, didn't you see where P. Z. & N. closed yesterday?"

"Haven't read a newspaper since I've been here, Nick, and don't intend to. When you go back tell my brokers to keep cool."

"But that Bates-Rimmer crowd means mischief, 'Cherub.' There's a lot of them in a big pool, and they're hammering your railroad holdings right and left. Some one has been leaking information, and they're hitting you where it will hurt. When I saw how things were going I began wiring you. Didn't you get the messages?"

"I knew those must be from you, Nick; no one else knew where I was."

"But why didn't you answer?"

"Well, I didn't read them, for one thing; I was too busy. We were having a bully time, the countess and I, feeding the swans."

"Feeding the swans!" Mr. Nicholas Walloway made a gesture indicating despair.

"Did you ever watch swans squabble for sweet crackers, Nick?"

"Crackers! You might just as well have thrown bunches of thousand-dollar bills at them. Why, 'Cherub,' P. Z. & N. opened at thirty-nine and five-eighths this morning. As soon as I found you hadn't shown up I started for you. I had my car meet me at the station, and it's outside now. We can just make the eleven-thirty back, and perhaps you'll be in time to stop them before it's all over. Come on, let's start."

"Sorry, Nick, but I couldn't think of it. I'm taking a holiday, you see."

"What! Do you mean to say that you're not coming?" Mr. Walloway gazed doubtfully at the "Cherub."

"Not to-day, Nick."

"Oh, I say, 'Cherub,' don't be an——" He checked himself with a swift glance at the countess, whose brown eyes instantly sought the cobwebby stuff in her lap. "Don't be foolish," he continued. "I haven't told you all—the worst, you know."

"Well, you can tell me all about it to-morrow, Nick."

"To-morrow! Great Scott, man, you don't understand! They mean to finish the job to-day. To-morrow might as well be next year. Why, you've barely a fighting chance left now, and I don't know as you have that. The street is wild with it. There's no knowing what has happened since I left. If you expect to save anything out of that deal you've got to jump in and hustle."

"I guess things are not as bad as all that, Nick. I'll be down bright and early in the morning."

Mr. Walloway stared hard at his friend for a moment. Then he paced across the room two or three times, stared again, started for the door and returned to put both hands on Mr. Devine's shoulders.

"'Cherub,'" he said, speaking with an effort at calmness, "you're too good a man to be beaten by a gang like that. You must come back. You have friends, lots of them. We'll get them together and go after that crowd. Come on, 'Cherub,' for your own sake."

Mr. Devine did not reply. He was looking with friendly interest at the man before him.

"Besides, it's the old Bates-Rimmer crowd," urged Walloway. "You know them; they're like a pack of mangy wolves."

"Yes, you're right, Nick. They've snapped at my heels many a time."

"And now they're at your throat, 'Cherub.' Come on, won't you?"

For an instant the "Cherub" hesitated. Then he jumped to his feet. As he did so he met the earnest eyes of the Countess Vecchi. Until then he seemed to have forgotten her presence.

"There!" exclaimed the "Cherub," "I had almost forgotten. I promised to drive you into the village this afternoon

to buy some more stuff for making cobwebs, didn't I, countess?"

"Timmins can do that, Mr. Devine," said the countess.

"No, I'm going to do it myself. Besides, you were to make one of those Italian salad dressings for luncheon. Ever try one, Nick?"

Mr. Walloway threw up his hands. "Devine," he said, hoarsely, "I'll wait outside in my cab for just three minutes and a half. If you are not there by the end of that time I'll have to go back without you."

"All right, Nick; much obliged for coming."

"But you'll send some word, even if you don't go, won't you?"

"You might give my regards to old Rimmer."

At the door Mr. Walloway consulted his watch and turned to remark, warningly: "Three minutes left, 'Cherub.' I'll be waiting for you."

"Better not, Nick. So long."

Mr. Devine had followed his friend to the door. Now he returned, to find that the countess had been looking expectantly after him. The cobwebby affair had been dropped hastily to the floor and lay tangled at her feet.

"This is folly, Mr. Devine, nothing but folly," she said, with an attempt at sternness.

"Perhaps," assented the "Cherub," carelessly; "but it's in a good cause."

"You mean that you are making this sacrifice to keep me from leaving the house that was once my home?" Then I must tell you that I shall not accept it. You must go at once."

"Come, come, now! Don't you take Nick Walloway too seriously. Nick's a little rattled, that's all. He hasn't been through as many of these affairs as I have."

"But isn't it true that your business enemies are taking advantage of your absence to make a combined attack?"

"Oh, those fellows are always ready for that sort of thing. I suppose they will do more or less damage, but I guess I can stand it."

"But you mustn't; no, you must not stay idly here on my account while they

are plundering you in that cowardly way. You must go back with Mr. Walloway. Please, go!"

"No," said the "Cherub," doggedly. "I can't."

"Can't! Why can you not go?" She was standing directly before him, holding out her hands in pleading manner.

"Because—well, because I think more of showing you that I'm not a born gambler than I do for all the railroad stock in the country. That's why."

This came straight from the heart of "Cherub" Devine. There could be no mistaking either the tone or the look in his blue eyes. And the countess could see and hear. She understood.

"Oh, oh!" There was surprise in the cry, perhaps joy. For an instant she hid her face in her hands. When she took them away the spots of color were gleaming beneath her brown eyes. Shyly and very demurely she came to him with clasped hands and gazed up at him as if to search for the truth in his face.

"I believe you," she whispered. "Oh, I do believe in you! But I want you to go. Go this time, to please me."

"Honest? Are you sure you want me to go?" He gripped his hands tightly at his side as he looked at her.

"Yes, yes! Go and—*smash* them." The fighting spirit of all the old Continental Hewingtons must have blazed up and burned anew in her brown eyes. "Don't let them beat you. Smash them hard!" She made a gesture with her soft, white hands to illustrate what she wished him to do. The "Cherub" smiled.

"But you will not run away while I am gone, will you?" he demanded.

"Perhaps not—if you smash them hard enough."

"Good for you, countess! You're a trump! I'll go. I'll smash 'em or go to smash trying. But you're to stay here until——"

"Yes, yes, but you must hurry," urged the countess. "Hurry; he is starting!"

Eluding the "Cherub's" attempt to take her hands in his, she dodged behind him, whirled him about by the shoulders, and pushed him toward the door.

"Hold on, Nick; I'm coming!" shouted the "Cherub."

He had just climbed into the already panting auto-car when the countess ran down the steps and tossed a package to him.

"I almost forgot," she said, breathlessly. "I wanted to ask you to sell those for me. They're some stocks or bonds or something, and I want them sold. That's all. Don't stop! Hurry!" and she waved at them to be gone.

Through his dust glasses the alert chauffeur was watching Mr. Walloway for directions.

"Yes, yes, full speed!" said that gentleman, impatiently.

The inner works of the vehicle began to whirr violently, the big car leaped forward, and a moment later the Countess Vecchi could see only a little cloud of dust that showed through the trees lining the road to the village.

## X.

It remained for a train boy to disclose just how the public viewed the crisis in Mr. Devine's affairs. Halfway to the city the boy came aboard with the early afternoon editions. From the headlines it was evident that the disturbance in Wall Street had become a popular topic, the sensation of the hour.

One enterprising journal indulged in a half-page cartoon, which was supposed to represent the situation. It was entitled "Plucking a Cherub." A scandalous caricature of Mr. Devine it was, showing him most inadequately clothed, but possessed of a pair of wings from which a group of bad boys were gleefully pulling what few feathers remained, while the victim rubbed his fists into tear-leaking eyes and made no attempt at defense.

"Don't look at that, 'Cherub,'" urged Nick Walloway. "Throw the thing out of the window."

"Why, I think that's pretty good," commented the "Cherub." "They haven't made me any too handsome, have they? Nor old Rimmer, either. Say, isn't that the old pirate to the life, though? See that turnip nose of his and

that bull neck! And there's young Billy Rimmer, too, reaching up for a handful of feathers. Oh, my, my!" and Mr. Devine rocked mirthfully over the cartoon.

"It would be funnier if it wasn't so damned near the truth," growled Walloway. "Of course, I don't know just how deep you've plunged on this P. Z. & N. deal, but I gathered that you'd gone in rather steep."

"Yes," admitted the "Cherub," more soberly, "I have. In fact, it's the biggest thing I ever tackled."

Nick Walloway gazed at him incredulously. "And right in the middle of it you take a day off to feed the swans at Hewington Acres!"

The "Cherub," staring dreamily at the car ceiling, nodded.

A gleam of understanding flashed across Mr. Walloway's mind. "'Cherub,'" he began, hesitatingly, "it—it isn't the countess, is it?"

The pink in the "Cherub's" chubby cheeks crept up behind his ears. He tried to disguise a schoolboyish grin, and then he proceeded to make a most elaborate denial.

"The countess!" he exclaimed. "Why, she's away out of my class, Nick. Oh, she's about a hundred per cent. too good for me—aristocratic, refined, old family and all that. Why, she wouldn't look at me, Nick, you know she wouldn't."

"I know that you've been looking at her, 'Cherub,' and I can't blame you. I wish you luck, old man."

"Luck nothing, Nick! I wouldn't have any show at all, I can see that."

"Yes, that's the way I felt once—and I hadn't. She told me to run home and not be silly."

"You, Nick!"

"Oh, I was only a youngster then. I got over it—almost. But you'll do better, I know you will."

"Do you think so, Nick? Honest, now? Shake hands on it—and don't whisper it to a soul."

"But you'd better quit monkeying with P. Z. & N.," added Mr. Walloway, "until you can give your whole time to it."

The "Cherub" ceased to stare dreamily. "Nick," he said, abruptly, "I'll tell you something. I've changed my plans. I'm going to do something besides speculate in that stock. I'm going to buy that road, and I've got to get control before next Friday noon."

"'Cherub,' you're crazy! It's impossible! Why, the Bates-Rimmer crowd scooped in two-fifths of the stock yesterday, so they say. You know what that means; they'll wreck it, wring it dry. The small outside holders have been tumbling over each other to unload. See here," and he pointed to a newspaper on his knee. "Fifty lots offered during the first half hour to-day, and the quotations dropping by quarter points. Why, you can't stop 'em, man. They've got you on the run."

"Yes, yes, it looks like it, I know. But wait until I've had a chance at them. Let me think this thing over."

Mr. Nicholas Walloway withdrew into his corner of the smoking compartment to stare absent-mindedly out of the window. The "Cherub" was soon apparently engaged in a profound contemplation of the end of his cigar. You would not have guessed, to look at him, that he was considering anything more serious than the flavor of the tobacco. Not until they were on the ferry did he break the silence. Then, briefly and crisply, he outlined his plan of action. Nick Walloway heard him through with a glow of admiration in his eyes.

"If you can do that, 'Cherub,' you'll win," he declared; "but if the scheme slips up—"

"Then I'm down and out. But it's got to go through," and Mr. Devine's mouth lost some of its cherubic curves. "You'll do your part, Nick. Oh, it will be easier than you think. They'll never suspect you're in it. And don't try to report until eleven to-night. Then you know where to come—private dining room, tenth floor. I'll have 'em all there at eleven."

Then the two men, to all intents, became as strangers in the crowd that surged through the ferry gates.

As you know, it was a great fight; not the greatest Wall Street has ever seen,

perhaps, but waged with the most bitter fury while it lasted. From a simple deal Mr. Devine's enterprise had developed into a struggle for mastery. A few hours before he had at risk only a small part of his fortune. Now he was preparing to stake it all, down to the last dollar.

When "Cherub" Devine appeared on the floor a half hour before closing time the rumors of his defeat were passing from mouth to mouth. The Bates-Rimmer retainers were indulging in a war dance of victory.

Silently the "Cherub" passed to his accustomed corner and began tearing pieces of paper into small bits with the same calm, unhurried air of abstraction as usual. Many glances were bestowed on him, most of them curious, a few sympathetic, some triumphantly vindictive. Everywhere he was regarded as a beaten man. Now and then a gray uniformed floor boy handed him messages, which he read leisurely and as leisurely reduced to fragments. Just as the session closed "Pop" Rimmer passed near him and turned to favor him with an apeline leer. The "Cherub" blinked unresponsively. He seemed too dazed by misfortune even to disguise his chagrin.

A somewhat different "Cherub" Devine it was, however, who met his half dozen lieutenants that night behind the seclusion of safely locked doors on the tenth floor of a gaudy, big hotel. He had become an alert, masterful, confident person, who thrilled those about him by a revelation of unguessed resources and unsuspected reserves of force.

The conference was neither long nor noisy. During its progress were consumed half a case of mineral water, perhaps a pound of Eidam and a dozen cigars. The affair was in sharp contrast to that obstreperous gathering in the main dining hall of the same hostelry, where "Pop" Rimmer and his cohorts held high revel until three in the morning.

The climax of the struggle was reached during Thursday. Along about the noon hour the members of the Bates-Rimmer combination were forced to

admit that the "Cherub" was still in the fight. They made the admission with profane unction. They did not understand why it was so. They only knew that in some mysterious manner their triumphant career had been checked. Hurriedly they gathered their forces to crush him. For a period it seemed that he had yielded again, and once more they were on the point of howling their glee, when the tide of battle began to turn against them for the second time.

Thus it went. All that afternoon the contest waged. Now the price of P. Z. & N. stocks slumped desperately, now it skyrocketed amazingly. Other stocks were affected. The whole list quaked and quivered as the struggling giants of finance wrestled heedlessly about the arena. On the floor masses of white-faced brokers swayed and shouted in mad frenzy. In the packed galleries the fascinated spectators caught the wild spirit of the moment and watched with tense, straining eyes.

Placidly smoking a fat, black cigar and tilting comfortably back in one of Walloway & Co.'s mahogany office chairs, "Cherub" Devine received bulletins from the front. That was the position in which Nick Walloway found him when, after the day was over, he rushed in, haggard of face and with an anxious look in his eyes.

"We lack fifty shares," he announced briefly.

"Then that's fifty we must get tomorrow morning," responded the "Cherub."

"It can't be done," declared Walloway, dropping hopelessly into a chair. "The country has been raked with a fine-toothed comb. We can't get hold of another share. I'm sorry, 'Cherub,' but I've done my best for you. The P. Z. & N.'s annual meeting is held at noon to-morrow and the Bates-Rimmer crowd has practically got us beaten now. If we only had just fifty shares more we could wipe them off the face of the earth."

"You're as bad as the countess," chuckled the "Cherub," amicably. Then, as this reflection recalled something to his mind, he thrust his hand



into an inner pocket of his coat and drew out a long envelope, at which he stared blankly.

A moment later he asked quietly: "How many shares did you say we lacked, Nick?"

"Fifty," gloomily responded Mr. Walloway, his head between his hands.

"And about how much would they be worth to me just now?"

"Worth! Why, anything — three hundred, five hundred, a thousand dollars a share, if you could get them."

"Well, here's a hundred shares." He tossed the long envelope to Walloway. "Just make a note of it that I owe the Countess Vecchi a hundred thousand. Come on, Nick, let's go have a game of billiards."

# XI.

In the life of J. Tasker Timmins the one day which he recalls with a flush of pride and a sense of importance is that memorable Friday when, between ten o'clock and three, he received no less than nine messages by telegraph. They were all from Mr. Devine. Sometimes the messenger found Timmins in the stable office, sometimes in the servants' quarters, and twice he discovered him waiting at the front entrance. Mrs. Timmins, who vainly demanded explanation of these things, alternately burned with curiosity and flamed with indignation. What game was Timmins up to, anyway? Why didn't he tell her what was going on? But Timmins would make no revelation.

As a matter of fact, Timmins himself did not understand the full import of the messages. In the first one Mr. Devine asked if the Hewingtons were still there. In the second he demanded to be informed if the Countess Vecchi had gone. In the third he cautioned Timmins to wire him if the countess made any preparation for leaving. In the fourth he asked solicitously as to the condition of the Countess Vecchi's sick aunt, whom he had never seen. Later telegrams instructed Timmins to meet various afternoon trains, and then told him to be at the station at five-thirty,

as Mr. Devine was coming up on a special.

Eppings, also, was favored with two messages, which notified him that Mr. Devine would be there for dinner, and finally the countess herself received this communication: "Wait. Coming up to-night. Important."

As a result, Hewington Acres hummed with anticipation. What could it mean? What had happened? What was going to happen?

Eppings was certain that Mr. Devine was bringing home some titled guest, possibly a duke or a lord, and he prepared dinner accordingly. Timmins wrapped himself in an air of mystery and had the cobs groomed until their rounded quarters glistened like the bottom of a new tin pail. The countess was puzzled. Even Mr. Hewington emerged from his study and wanted to know why everyone seemed so disturbed.

"It's because of Mr. Devine, sir," said Eppings. "He's coming up on a special train, sir, and I must see about the table at once, sir."

"Dear, dear!" murmured Mr. Hewington.

So it happened that when Timmins finally did dash home from the village to bring the lathered cobs up at the door with a fine flourish, the whole household was on tiptoes. Formally assembled to greet the returning "Cherub" were the countess and her father, on the veranda, in the door Eppings and the French maid, while in the background or peering from windows were the other servants.

But no "Cherub" was in evidence. In his stead, Mr. Nicholas Walloway stepped from the carriage. He regarded the expectant group with some interest and lost no time in stating that he had been commissioned by Mr. Devine to transact some business with the countess. When they were alone in the library, she demanded of him:

"Now what does this mean, Nicholas? Where is Mr. Devine?"

Mr. Walloway had seated himself at the library table and was sorting some documents. He started as he heard her

address him in that way. He recalled that it was at his urgent request she had begun to call him Nicholas. Then he remembered that this had been some years ago. After a swift glance of inquiry at the countess he replied, slowly:

"I think you will understand in a moment; that is, if you know Mr. Devine at all. It's about those stocks you gave him to sell."

"Oh, yes! Did he sell them?"

Mr. Walloway nodded and bent his head over the papers.

"How good of him! I'm afraid it was a bother, just when he was so worried. But tell me, did he beat those horrid speculators?"

Again Mr. Walloway nodded.

"Did—did he—smash them?"

Mr. Walloway looked up at her curiously. "He smashed them, countess."

"Oh, I've been so anxious! Isn't he just splendid, Nicholas? Isn't he?"

"I am glad you think so," said Mr. Walloway, warmly. "I think so myself. And it will please the 'Cherub' mightily to know how you feel."

"Will it, really?" Then the countess sighed. "If he were only something besides a stock gambler! Don't you think, Nicholas, that his talents are worthy of something better?"

Mr. Walloway's eyebrows lifted a trifle at this.

"I hadn't thought of his talents as being misdirected," he said. "In fact, I hardly see how he could do better, and I have told him so, but evidently he has been listening to some one who thinks as you do, for he has given up speculating in stocks."

"He—he has given up! When did he do that, Nicholas?"

"At noon to-day, when he elected himself president of the P. Z. & N. Railroad."

"A railroad president! Why, that is quite a nice position, isn't it?"

"It is almost respectable," laughed Mr. Walloway. "But this isn't exactly my errand. It was that block of stock of yours, you know, which helped the 'Cherub' to win the fight. He found it in his pocket just when he needed it most, so he bought it of you at his own

price. I don't think you will be dissatisfied with the bargain. Here, as part payment, is a deed for Hewington Acres; and here is a check for the balance. The 'Cherub' charged me to tell you that it was my estimate of the value of those stocks which he took."

The face of the countess betrayed her amazement as she looked from the documents to Mr. Walloway and back to the table again.

"Why, there is some mistake; surely there is some mistake!"

"None at all, countess. You had the good fortune to market your stock at exactly the right moment, that's all."

"Then—then Hewington Acres is mine!"

"Every bit of it. There's the deed made out in your name."

The countess clasped the document tenderly and reverently.

"But where is Mr. Devine?" she demanded, suddenly. "Why did he not come to tell me this himself?"

"Well, you see, the 'Cherub' thought that perhaps—that is, he didn't want to—to—oh, he flunked, countess! That's all, flunked at the last minute. He's waiting out there at the gates, sitting in my car and behaving like a bashful schoolboy on recitation day. I tried to make him come in and speak his piece like a little man. I argued with him, I pleaded with him, I abused him. But he wouldn't stir. I warned him that I should make no excuses. I told him that if you asked where he was I should tell the truth about him, and I have. He had no right to send me on such an errand. He should have come himself, instead of backing out when he was almost at the door. I've no doubt you'll think he is absurd."

The countess had been listening musingly.

"Yes, he is absurd," she assented, "delightfully so."

"Do you wish me to tell him that?"

"No," returned the countess. Then, gathering up the documents, she tossed them across the table. "I want you to tell him that I refuse to accept those unless he brings them himself. I shall wait here for ten minutes." Then she



withdrew to a window nook and sat down with her back turned resolutely on the door.

In that position the "Cherub" discovered her when he finally yielded to the inevitable, and came haltingly to the front. At the door of the room he paused for a moment, expecting a greeting, but she gave no sign that she knew of his presence. At the table he made another pause, coughed slightly and moved a book noisily. The countess might have been deaf for all the notice she took of him. Not until he stood beside her in the window nook did she look up to say:

"Oh, how good of you to come when you didn't want to!"

"Nick told you, then? He's a chump," remarked the "Cherub." "It was only because I thought you had seen enough of me."

"That occurred to you, I suppose, after you had sent all those telegrams?"

Mr. Devine seemed to have no parry in readiness for this thrust. He sat down on the window seat facing her, stared despondently at the rug, and appeared to be thoroughly uncomfortable. The "Cherub" in this rare frame of mind was not convincingly pathetic. His chubby features were not well suited for the rôle. At his attempt to impersonate gloom the countess only smiled.

"Wasn't it because you thought it would be embarrassing for me to thank you for—well, for these?" and she pointed to the documents in his hand. "It was that, wasn't it, which made you act so absurdly about coming in?"

"I suppose it was," he acknowledged.

"I hope there was no other reason," continued the countess. "It wasn't because you thought I would be ungrateful; you didn't think that, I know."

The "Cherub" squirmed at this and ventured an appealing look at her. He surprised a gleam of mischief in the brown eyes. Then he felt better. So she was just teasing him for his bashfulness? He responded as if to a direct challenge.

"Shall I tell you why I didn't come?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes," said the countess, regarding him doubtfully.

"It was because I was afraid," solemnly declared the "Cherub."

"Afraid! Not of me?"

"No, of myself." He was looking boldly at her now, with a yearning in his blue eyes. He spoke low and earnestly. "I was afraid that if I saw you again I should tell you that you're the best and sweetest woman in the world. And now I've done it!" he added, desperately, bracing himself to withstand whatever cataclysm might follow:

But the Countess Vecchi neither fled from him in terror nor indignantly denounced him. A low, fluttering little cry of surprise escaped her as she hid her face in the convenient window draperies.

"I'm awfully sorry," he went on, hastily. "I didn't mean to think of you in that way at all, or to let you know that I did. I knew that I had no right to do it. But I have, ever since we took that walk in the rain together. I should have gone away after that. But I didn't; and the longer I stayed the sweeter you seemed. I tried to keep you from finding out, but—oh, I'm ashamed of myself, countess! Please forget it all and—and I'll go away."

From the depths of the window draperies the countess replied: "I—I don't think you've done anything so—so dreadful, Mr. Devine."

"Don't you?" he said, eagerly. "Honest, now?" It was audacity which prompted him to possess himself of one of her hands. "Then—then perhaps you will let me tell you the whole story. Will you?"

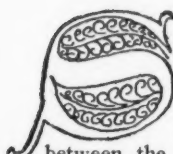
By the exercise of more audaciousness, Mr. Devine was able to whisper this request directly into the small, pink ear of the countess; for it may as well be admitted that the "Cherub" was now holding her in his arms. He had yielded to a sudden impulse, you see.

"I don't think you need tell me—after that, do you?" whispered the countess. "Besides"—here she moved her head with a snuggling motion against his shoulder—"I knew all about it days ago."



# SQUARE BILL

BY HOLMAN F. DAY



SQUARE BILL'S office was up over Brickett's general store, and a rickety, outside stairway led to it. The old tin sign between the dusty front windows read: "William Gray, Notary Public. Pension Vouchers Executed."

The frequent purr of the coffee grinder in the store beneath was obligato to the conversation of 'Square Bill's occasional clients, and the aroma of spice and kerosene stole up through the floor cracks to mingle with the somewhat athletic fragrance of his black T. D. pipe.

He forgot one of those sooty-hued pipes at county court once, and the young lawyers got ribbons and hung it from a chandelier in the attorneys' room, with a card reading: "Erected in memory of Bill Gray."

Twice afterward 'Square Bill patiently hunted for that pipe when he went to court, for its "stoutness," after many months of careful seasoning, appealed to him. But he never looked as high as the chandelier.

Folks who knew 'Square Bill well declared that he never had looked high enough in life, either. Men who understood such things said that he knew enough law to match any judge on the State bench. But at seventy-three he was still sitting up in his little office over Brickett's store, smoking his pipe and reading his law books with their shiny, hand-smooched bindings.

Litigants of the "good and mad" sort, who came banging up his stairs hot for fight, frequently chafed under his jocular word and smile, declared that he was "too lazy to put a case through court," and went steaming to a lawyer who would scrap. Therefore the court records did not have a long roll of cases indorsed by 'Square Gray.

But a lot of folks, wiping misty eyes—folks who usually kept still about such matters—could have recited a wonderful roll of cases he had listened to, smiled over and said "Pooh!" to, sending the shamed or consoled parties off with a flea in the ear about the foolishness of going to law.

"No, there isn't much money in that kind of practice," 'Square Bill used to admit. "But I never ste'boyed a bulldog into a fight yet, nor rubbed a tomcat's ears, nor drew a writ when it was better to draw receipts."

And hence the label hitched to 'Square Bill by his townsmen: "Good adviser, but ain't no lawyer."

So!

Well, there in the office one afternoon sat the 'square, tipped back in his chair, his angular knees cocked against the table's edge and supporting a law book. The watery fall sunshine threading through the cobwebs in the window fell upon his shiny, threadbare coat and supplied the only warmth in the mustily-raw atmosphere of the room. He chafed his nose as he read. His gaunt, beardless face rose out of a huge, old-style silk neck stock. The

women of Palermo said that 'Square Bill was too "moderate" to catch up with the styles. But the women always were inclined to make fun of him as a slow poke in general, and told humorous stories of the way he kept "old bach hall" in the little rooms adjoining his office.

No sound in the 'square's place that afternoon except the dozy buzzing of a chilled fly in a corner of the pane and the lisp of a turning book leaf.

Mrs. Micajah Dunham had run the halter rope through the hole in the gnawed hitching post in front of the store and was now climbing stiffly up the outside stairs. A bonnet, trimmed with dust-spotted imitations of grapes, seemed to pinch her face, and her narrow shoulders also appeared to be pinched together under her shawl.

'Square Bill did not get up when she came into the office, but deferentially laid his pipe in the tin box on the table, put his hat beside it and pushed up his spectacles. She sat down in a wooden armchair, well to the edge on account of the dust on which her housewife's eye glared with disfavor.

"Square Bill," she said, "I've come to consult you legally and I've brought the dockyments." She suddenly snapped herself up, crossed the room and laid on his open book a sheet of rudely scalloped pink paper, on which were pasted hearts cut out of red and blue tissue.

"That's almost the first to which I really was knowin'," she said, "though I had a glimmer of an idea for some time. Oh, I tell you, it ain't come on all to once, this thing ain't!"

"What is this?" inquired the notary, lifting it gingerly and pulling his spectacles from forehead to nose. There were some lines of writing, and he read them aloud in dry, legal monotone, the woman greeting the sentiments with scornful sniffs:

For them that love, the world is bright,  
-And when it's bright it is a sign  
That some one's eyes must shed the light;  
Oh, darling, be my Valentine!

"I caught Mr. Dunham writing that

tormented sculch out of a book at the sekert'ry in the best room," she said; "and that was as long ago as last February. And I took it away from him. But I reckon he slyed 'round somewhere and made another one. He's been dead set and possessed by the Old Harry for months, 'Square Bill, till I'm plumb out with him and I can't stand it no longer. Now you can see by this what I've had to put up with."

She unfolded a long roll composed of many sheets of note paper pasted together, and he read in the same calm voice her penciled entries:

- Jan. 17. He carried paper bag of Northern Spies to schoolhouse door.
- Jan. 19. He took broken candy to door.
- Jan. 20. He visited school.
- Jan. 22. Hitched and took her to her boarding place when it snowed.
- Jan. 24. Hitched before school and went after her.

The notary skipped into February, after noting a general similarity in succeeding January entries.

- Feb. 10. Suspect he is making a Valentine.
- Feb. 12. Caught him at it and took Valentine.

"This is it, eh?" he inquired, tapping the gaudily decorated sheet on the table.

"That's it!" she snapped. "Besides all that, it's been a continual peddlin' out to her all this last summer term of apples and candy and bouquets and folderols. By twistin' a little I can see that schoolhouse door right from my but'ry winder, and there it all is in that paper, chalked right up to date against him. I stood it the spring term and the summer term without raising particular Ebenezer, but when he started in again this term I just——"

"I understand, do I," he interrupted, shaking the long sheet at her gently, "that this record of devotion to a certain schoolhouse door means that 'Caje——"

"It means," she cried, "that that misable, old, softheaded fool of a husband of mine has fell in love with that young teeter-bird of a schoolmarm in our dees-trick and has acted out till I'm distract-

ed. I can't do nothin' with him, 'square. He just grunts and growls and clears out o' the house when I go at him. This is the end. Understand? It's the wind-up! There's the dockyments. Now I want a bill of di-voise, and you needn't try to argy me out of it, same's they say you try to ev'ryone that comes to you for law. My mind is set as Pisgy itself." She brought her work-stained hand down on the chair rail. "This thing ain't the fit of a minute, 'Square Bill; it's been a-comin' on and a-comin' on. I ain't a woman that switches and r'ars and runs away at the first boo—but when I do get started, you nor no one else can't stop me."

The notary peered at her over his spectacles during this declamation.

"I'm not going to have a fight with you, Esther," he said, mildly, smiling into her excited and hostile eyes. "But you do surprise me about 'Caje. I always thought he was as steady going as a stone boat. There isn't insanity in his family, is there?"

"Insanity! Cat's foot!" she retorted, angrily. "The fool has jest gone and fell in love, that's all."

"You and 'Caje were about the first couple I recorded when I was elected town clerk," he said, leaning back in his chair. An old dog lay under the table. 'Square Bill, as he talked, began to gently scratch the old dog's back with his dangling toe, and the dog responded by gratefully thumping his tail on the floor.

"I wisht the minister's tongue had been paralyzed before he ever pronounced the words," she nipped, spitefully.

"Always a hard-working man, 'Caje was," the notary reminiscently went on. "At it tough and tight all the time. This—this love business hasn't taken his mind o'f the farm, has it?" he inquired.

"Oh, he's stewin' and fubbin' most of the time, as usual," she admitted, grudgingly. "But this ain't gettin' on to that di-voise, 'Square Bill. You needn't beat the bush nor—"

"Let's see!" he mused. "Poor, crazy Ben Haskell's girl, 'Liza, is teaching in the Dunham district, I believe. Is she

as pretty as her mother was before her?"

"High-headed snippet," snorted Mrs. Dunham. "But I've took her down a peg or two, I can tell you that. I called her out to the door twice and give her an earful, and yisterday I went straight into the schoolhouse and give her her come-uppance right before her scholars. I'll show her 'tain't safe to meddle with my husband."

"What did she say?" asked the old man, with some interest.

"Cried baby and sniffled each time, and said she wasn't none to blame," the woman replied, scornfully; "but ye needn't tell me that any man is draggin' after a woman's gown tail if there ain't encouragement. 'T any rate, I've been 'round the deestrick among the fam'lies and she's goin' to be put out o' that school. How long will it take me to git my bill from Mr. Dunham?"

"Is all your hurry so that he can marry the schoolmarm or so you can ring in number two?" he inquired, with a little chuckle. Her face paled and then flushed. "I should hate to see her in your house, Esther," he said, a queer flicker of amusement in his eyes; "those young gaffers of girls aren't good housekeepers, as a rule."

"She shan't ever have a stick of my stuff," she snapped, but her voice broke and her eyes filled with tears. "I—I hadn't thought of 'Caje gittin' married ag'in," she said, uncertainly. "But I guess I see now—that—that he has been wanting to git red o' me by doin' all these things—and he used to think a sight o' me, 'Square Bill."

He looked intently into her angular face with its hard mouth lines.

"You know I'm not much of a hand to soft-soap and compliment, Esther," he said. "I knew you at school and I've watched you more or less since. You were kind of cute as a girl, with your way of spitting out what you thought, but the same tricks in kittens and old cats look different. You've nagged and browbeaten your husband all your life, and you know it!"

His tone was severe. "You could have driven 'Caje Dunham with a cot-

ton thread and teamed him anywhere. But you used goad sticks and hot pitch and a twist bit, and it isn't any wonder he's got skittish and balky."

"I knew 'bout how 'twould be if I came to you," she said, her face hardening once more. "When I want a sermon I'll go to the parson. But I came here for law, and I brought the dockments to prove what I said. I've been patient, I tell you, until——"

"You've been what you call patient a few weeks, Esther, and 'Caje Dunham has been patient ever since he married you."

"Are you stickin' up for that missable critter?" she demanded, starting out of her chair. "How could anyone expect a dried-up old bach to understand anything about marriage and the rights of a woman, anyway? Giv' me them papers. I know where I can buy law if it ain't for sale here."

He calmly held the papers away from her clutching hands.

"How much have you and 'Caje put away between you?" he inquired, disregarding her temper.

She hesitated a moment with the caution of the country woman resenting neighborly intrusion, but he encouraged her by hinting:

"In case of alimony, you know!"

"We've got risin' 'leven thousand in the bank, and twenty-five hunderd out on first mo'gidges."

"And not a chick nor child to leave it to," he murmured, looking at her with sympathy in his eyes. "It's too bad that your little 'Cilla was called away to her treasures in heaven before she could enjoy some of the treasures you heaped on earth for her—you two poor old, tugalugging critters, you!" She sat down and her work-stained, knotted hands trembled as she folded them on her lap.

"Saving, skinching and piling it up!" he went on. "What good has it ever done you, Esther? Why didn't you and 'Caje knock off and have a little fun together in the world before you got hardened this way? Grubbing and grubbing with your noses down to the ground!"

"Tain't any disgrace to be prudent

and forehanded, is it," she demanded, "even if we ain't got no one now to enjoy it after we're gone? Oh, 'Square Bill"—the tears suddenly flooded into the cold eyes—" 'twould have been different with 'Caje and me if only 'Cilla'd been left to us. Hain't neither of us knowed what to do with ourselves sence we laid her away in the graveyard."

He unfolded his bony frame with the abrupt and angular motions of a carpenter's jointed rule, stood up to his gaunt height and then walked over to her and patted her shoulder bowed under its faded shawl.

"And as little as you've really got left in this world now, Esther," said he, "here you are, wanting to get rid of the biggest hunk of it. Let me tear up this miserable list of 'Caje's temporary aberrations. Then I'll go have a talk with him and——"

" 'Square Bill," she cried, starting up, "you've known me from a little snippet. You know I ain't one to fly off to no tangents. I've told you once before that this ain't been a one-night's growth. I've kept them tabs there to show it. I'm goin' to have a bill from that man, I say! If you don't want to take the case, out with it bus'ness-like, and I'll go farther. But the di-vose I'm goin' to have." The old tone he knew so well and her flashing gaze stopped his proffered mediation.

"Well, Esther," he said, with a sigh, "leave your papers and I'll have notice of the libel served."

"When?" she demanded.

"Day after to-morrow."

"So do. I shall plan accordingly." She went out of the office with her lips set tight, and 'Square Bill leaned back and rubbed the old dog's silky ear softly between thumb and forefinger, and pondered, his eyes on the smoke-stained ceiling.

Micajah Dunham was at work stacking corn stalks in his lower field a couple of days later when he saw two men coming across the furrows among the scattered globes of the pumpkins. One was the familiar "bean-pole" figure of 'Square Gray. Behind him followed the equally well-known, waddling bulk of

"Sawed-off" Purdy, the local deputy of the county sheriff.

"Hen', just hand 'Caje that paper," directed the notary, after the greetings. "Then, if you've a mind to, you go back to the team while I have a word here."

The farmer's sullen face paled as he took the paper, first dragging his earth-soiled hands across his trousers legs. A legal document frightened him.

"It isn't often that a lawyer comes along with his writ," commented 'Square Bill, "but I felt as though this paper might need a little elucidation and perhaps something else." The farmer blinked, holding the writing aslant. The sheet cracked and fluttered in his trembling hands.

"I don't owe money nor nothin' to be sued for. I ain't got my specs here, 'square," he agitatedly said, at last, after long squinting. "I can't just make it out. What is it?"

"Esther has sued you for a bill of divorce, 'Caje," the notary explained, bluntly. "Charge is cruel and abusive treatment. From what she tells me, you are knowing pretty well to the whys and wherefores."

"Di-vose! Di-vose!" Dunham stammered over and over. "Esther sue me? This is some kind of a lawyer trick! Lawyers is always stirrin' trouble. But I didn't reckon you was one of that kind, 'Square Bill."

"Look here, 'Caje"—the old notary put his thin hand on the farmer's sleeve—"would you rather have me handle this matter—me who knows you and Esther from the ground up—or would you rather see that young whippet from the Corner, who'd lift your heart out of you if he could pile up costs that way? Now sit right down on this tussock and tell me what you mean by—by—" he looked across the field toward the schoolhouse, and added, with a twinkle of a smile—"by your volunteering in the cause of education?"

Micajah was visibly discomposed.

"If you was a school agent in a deestrick," he muttered, "and there was a poor, lonesome, orphan little critter of a girl teachin' the school, wouldn't you sort o' show her a few attentions so's

to keep her in the deestrick, seein' that the children all like her? I've tried to explain to Esther, 'square, that it's only in the way of school gover'munt, as you might say, but you know what a woman is."

"I'm afraid I don't understand quite as well as I ought to," admitted the old notary, sadly; "but as for you, I reckon you don't know 'em at all. 'Caje, there are a good many things I could say to you right now, and I would say 'em if I thought you knew any better than all this. But, you poor old critter, you don't know! You simply don't know! I'm going to take you with that paper in your hand right up to your wife. We'll see! We'll see! Come along."

He led the way across the field, up the apple-tree-bordered lane and into the house. There was no one in the kitchen nor in the little sitting room where Esther Dunham sat afternoons, rocking and sewing, the sunshine filtering on her through the leaves of the crowding geraniums and petunias on the window shelves. No one in all the house. Only the clock ticked and the flies buzzed disappointedly on the outside of the screens. They searched and called. Everything was tidied. The table had been reset after the noon meal, and its well-scoured ware glinted cheerfully.

Micajah grabbed the notary's arm.

"She's took her napkin ring," he gasped. "She's gone, 'square!" The husband hurried into the west bedroom and fumbled in the closet. "Her clothes is gone, 'square," he called, mournfully. "Oh, my Gawd! if this ain't trouble come double, then I don't know what 'tis." He sat down on the edge of the bed and seemed about to weep.

"Get up, there, you old fool!" the notary roared. "I've about concluded that the two of you need guardians or—or—keepers." He stood before Micajah, his lean arms akimbo, his eyes flashing. "Eleven thousand in the banks and twenty-five hundred on first mortgages," he sneered. "And while you've been pawing that out of the muck, you and your wife, you have never stood up straight, taken full, free



breath of God's air and sunshine and looked into each other's eyes like real man and wife. Oh, 'Caje Dunham, I'm ashamed of you."

The man only stared at him stupidly.

"You don't know yet what I mean, do you?" the lawyer went on. "You're waiting for me, an' old bach, to explain to you your mistakes and point out your duty."

A youngster came flopping barefoot along the shed walk.

"Square Gray," he called, "Mis' Dunham is over to my marm's, and she jest see you come in here and sent word if you've got any bus'ness with her you can call over there. She's brung her clothes to our house, too, and she's goin' to be our boarder," he added, triumphantly. He had edged into the bedroom, and his round eyes, big with the half knowledge and guesses of childhood, goggled at the woe-stricken husband.

The old notary meditatively stroked his nose a moment and then, turning without a word, stalked out of the house. The boy pattered on ahead. Dunham picked up the writ and followed dejectedly.

"Be you goin' to stay to the big meetin' to-night, 'Square Gray?" inquired the boy, bursting with his fresh knowledge. "Mis' Dunham and my marm an' my pa and Mr. Bolster are goin' to have all the people meet at the school-house to-night and discharge the teacher." He turned his urchin's stare of inquisitive significance on Dunham stubbing behind in the highway dust. "Mis' Dunham come into school this afternoon and told teacher, and teacher didn't go home after school, but I peeked in the winder and she's there cryin' an'—"

"Bub," said 'Square Bill, severely, "you're anxious to grow up to be a good big man, aren't you?"

"Yep."

"Well, there's nothing that stunts growth like using your tongue too much. That's why so many women are shorter and slimmer than men. Now you remember that fact all your life, and some day when you grow up good

and tall you'll remember that a nice old lawyer gave you that valuable advice and never charged you a cent for it."

The boy, impressed by the grave tones, stared up and down the towering figure, slowly slooped up the moisture of his open mouth and closed his lips apprehensively.

Mrs. Dunham was on the front porch of the neighbor's house, defiantly awaiting their approach.

"Have you served that paper as you agreed?" she demanded, when they were still some distance away down the path.

The abandoned husband held up the fateful document, and was about to burst into appealing speech, but she stamped her foot and checked him.

"Not a word—not a word from you," she shrielled, fiercely. "It's all over and done and the passel tied up and the string cut 'twixt us. I'm here to stay till I git my bill and my allowance by the court. I shall watch that house till I git my own out of it. Then you can go to pot and see the kittle bile, for all I shall care. You ought to be ashamed to face me with the stigmy of that law paper on you," she declared, pointing at him as at something proscribed. Her hosts were at the window, listening with manifest enjoyment. The situation nearly maddened Dunham.

"Talk to her, for fury's sake, talk to her, 'Square Bill!" he entreated, tears on his cheeks. "When she has twitted me I hain't talked right to her, and I know it now. I'm awful sorry—I'm terrible, awful, desp'rit sorry I talked up-pish to you, Esther," he wailed. "I hain't fell in love with no one else. I vow I hain't. I am jest—I was jest—"

"Oh, you was only Mister Pompous-on-Parade all so fine and gay," she sneered, "and you think one drop o' goose grease is now goin' to cure all the smart and the hurt. But I tell you now, as I have told 'Square Gray, once my mind is made up it is set as the eternal hills. Now can you get that through your wool?" she stormed, blazing her eyes at her husband.

"I know your disposition is inclined that way, Esther," he faltered, lifting



his eyes to her piteously. "An' you say there ain't no way, no chance——"

"No, sir!" she spat.

He pondered a while.

"I dunno jest how 'twill be, gittin' along alone," he said, the material features of the situation occurring first of all to his slow, farmer comprehension—the reflections of a man suddenly turned out of the rut in which all his life had flowed like muddy water. "Which of the milk pans is to be skimmed to-night, Esther?"

"I marked 'em for you," she said, stiffly. "And the cooked stuff is on the swing shelf in the sullerway. Dough-nuts and cookies in the stun' jar 'side of the flour barrel in the but'ry."

"Esther," broke in the notary, "if you and 'Caje will sit down over to your house with me I'll venture to say we can come to some more sensible arrangements than all this amounts to."

"You're up to your old tricks again, 'Square Bill," she cried, sarcastically. "There are some folks you can wind around your little finger and some you can't, and"—she patted her flat breast—"I am one of the kind with too stiff a backbone to be wound. Let him go home and eat cold vittles, and if he gets lonesome let him pee-ruse that paper he holds in his hand." She whirled on her heel and went into the house, slamming the door spitefully.

For a moment the notary looked with a flicker of sympathy into the appealing eyes of the farmer. Then he said, gruffly:

"Come along home, 'Caje, and 'tend to your chores, and be down at the schoolhouse at——" He hesitated a moment, and then, seeing the master of the household starting for the barn with his milk pails, he called: "Oh, I say, Uncle Paul, what is the hour set for the lynching to-night?"

"Lynchin'?" repeated the mystified man.

"Well, I guess I didn't pick the right word exactly," said the notary, with a chuckle. "Inquisition would hit 'it nearer, perhaps. At the schoolhouse, I mean, Uncle Paul!"

"If what you're drivin' at with your

lawyer lingo is our deestrick meetin', it's set for ha' f-pas' seven," the old man replied, indignantly, detecting sarcasm in the lawyer's tone.

"You can drive back to the village," called 'Square Bill to the deputy sheriff, who had walked the horse up to the roadside and was comfortably lolling on the wagon seat. "I'll come along when I get ready."

The mellowness of the waning autumn afternoon was chilling a bit, and the sun was swimming in quivering light behind the high hills. 'Square Bill clasped his hands behind his back and plodded down toward the schoolhouse. His old dog, who had been summarily poked out from under the wagon seat by the unfeeling deputy, scuffled through the dried roadside leaves. All the eyes of the little neighborhood watched the notary when he turned in through the schoolhouse yard and disappeared in the entryway. But those eyes did not see him when he sat down beside a sobbing girl, patted her curls, and began to talk to her. They did not see him when after a time he raised her chin on his forefinger and wiped her eyes as he would have wiped away the tears of a grieving child. The neighbors' eyes only saw him when, just as dusk was flooding, he walked away down the road, holding the little schoolmistress by the hand.

The schoolhouse was well filled that evening. People came straggling up across the fields by short cuts, following lanterns that winked between the striding legs of the bearers. The nearer neighbors brought lamps, shielding the blaze with curved palms as they walked. The lanterns were hung on the nails about the walls over the evergreen wreaths that the little teacher had plaited. The lamps were placed on the knife-whittled desks, under whose narrow confines the knees of the grown-ups were painfully bent. The people sat and whispered and waited. The rumor had gone abroad that 'Square Bill was at the teacher's boarding place and would be present that evening, though for just what purpose no one understood. Therefore a murmur ran about

the room when he came blinking in from the gloom. The little teacher followed timidly. He lifted her chair from the platform. This rostrum was still unoccupied. After he had placed the chair for her so that she need not face the peerings and eye-borings, he ascended the platform and placidly sat down in the visitors' chair, crossed his knees and swung his dusty foot comfortably. The old dog beside him, fresh from his run in the fields, surveyed the audience with benignly extended jaws and rapped his tail as though it were a chairman's gavel.

There was deep and embarrassed silence for a long time. At last a man gruntingly worked his legs out from under a bench, rose and mumbled without much enthusiasm:

"I think it is the sense of this meetin' that 'Square Gray serve as presidin' officer, he knowin' how—how——"

"I will accept the honor," blandly broke in the notary, rising briskly. He had calculated on forcing this point, for his townspeople were accustomed to see him presiding at all public gatherings.

His selection now gave him his desired opportunity of directing the meeting as he saw fit.

"Neighbors," he began, "once when I was a boy my father owned a flock of turkeys, and I had a little rabbit about half grown. You remember the old farm on the Ridge Road that father took up?" Several nodded. His tone was the sociable chat of an old friend. The stiffness that oppressed the farmers and their women began to thaw. All assemblages at the send-off seemed to them like "meetin'," and inspired awful solemnity. "Dretful cunning little chap that rabbit was, folks. Gracious, wasn't I proud of him, though! He used to hop around the yard and nibble clover, and you know how a rabbit's nose will flicker when he eats—like a lawyer's tongue in a horse case." His listeners greeted this trust at the profession with much hilarity.

"Well, the little rabbit hopped about the yard where the big turkeys bristled and flustered and pecked and scratched.

Rabbit was busy getting its living and didn't mind the turkeys. And the turkeys didn't pay much of any attention to the rabbit. But one day one of those hen turkeys made what you might call a mis-peck at a grasshopper, happened to get hold of that little rabbit's ear, and the turkey was so surprised she h'isted it right up and held on. Now it's the nature of turkeys, when they see another one holding up something that seems like a good, tempting morsel, to close in on the run and get their share. So in they tore. First hen turkey, however, ran off with the rabbit. Thought now it must be good to eat, seeing how get hold of that little rabbit's ear, and it down to take a peck, and the others crowded around, and without really knowing what they were pecking at, they tore that poor little rabbit all to bits before I realized what was happening."

The audience blinked up at him, scarcely comprehending the application of his allegory. Now he straightened till his head grazed the cracked ceiling.

"Since then," he went on, "I have always had an eye out to protect the innocent rabbits from excited turkeys who don't realize what they're pecking at till it's too late." A woman's voice interrupted him here. It was Esther Dunham who spoke.

"As near as I can ketch what you're drivin' at, 'Square Gray," she said, irritably, "you're callin' the women of this school deestrick turkeys, and I for one don't consider that is a compliment, to say the least." He merely smiled indulgently at his audience and went on.

"As old Anse Breed, the chicken thief, used to say: 'It's a wise fowl that doesn't step off the roost onto the first warm board that's stuck up.' Now we'll just let the story I've told stand for itself. Everyone present knows why you have met here to-night. All this gossip and say-so and guess-so has been thrashed over and over. I'll not soil my mouth by rolling it across my tongue. What are the facts? Here is a little girl—only a little girl; Ben Haskell's 'Liza, born and brought up in this town. Her mother dead and her father worse than dead, poor critter—put away from the

world forever in a lunatic asylum. Here's this little girl, tryin' to earn her livin' honestly, takin' care of the youngsters you are glad to have out from underfoot, you women. And you are all ready to turn and rend her at the first squawk of——"

"Look a-here, 'Square Gray," shrilled Mrs. Dunham, starting up, "do you mean to, tell me my husband ain't——"

"Sit down, woman!" the notary thundered. He strode off the platform. His face worked with furious indignation. "Who are you to analyze the motives and emotions of the human heart? A self-operating dish-washing machine! What is your old fool of a husband, that he can understand them, either? A doubled-over grub worm! 'Leven thousand dollars in the banks!" He snarled the words at them. "Rooted by your snouts out of the soil, and you never lifting your eyes to God's sun and sky and open heart and lovin' eye and generous impulse. Yes, I know I'm harsh and bitter," he shouted. "I am bitter toward all of you that live that way, and you in this town have always known my feelings. I dare to tell you truths about yourselves. I dare to say to you, Esther Dunham, that you have maligned a pure and innocent girl, who has minded her own business. I dare to tell you that you have stamped upon the torch of love in your own house until you trod out every spark. And that husband of yours don't know what's the matter with him. He's been bumping around like an old, blind mule. He don't know his own heart. All under God's heavens he needs is the love of a child—a child, Esther Dunham. He has seen again in this poor girl here the image of the one he lost. He has built another altar for his affections, and if it is outside your own walls blame yourself, Esther Dunham."

He clacked his long finger smartly into his palm. "Wake up, 'Caje!" he cried. "Wake up, my man! Do you see now what the hankering in your heart meant?" The old farmer tucked his head between his arms on the desk and wept weakly.

"Poor little girl," crooned 'Square

Bill, softly, as he stroked the schoolma'am's curls, "poor little girl! They are hard millstones, hard and cruel millstones between which you are ground—and none of you knew—none of you knew!"

He gazed long and silently and rebukingly over the audience that shifted uneasily, shuttling eyes from him to the floor.

"Now who wants to stand forth as persecutor of this abused child?" he demanded, his hand still protectingly on her head.

No one moved or stirred.

Then, after a time, he took the girl's hand, raised her to her feet, and, slowly advancing along the aisle toward Esther Dunham, began to talk. He moved only step by step, and the eloquence that trembled on his lips was the soul outpouring of a man who had lived the life of human justice and generosity that he preached. He probed to the depths of her being, pulled away all the husks of selfishness the years had piled, layer on layer, and reached the mother instinct. And at last she rose and came to meet them, the mother light shining on her face.

"Esther," he said, very gently, "don't you suppose you'll look better with that softness in your eyes when 'Cilla meets you at the gate of heaven? Why don't you practice that look the rest of your life? But you need something to practice on. There are lots of things goin' to waste up to your house since 'Cilla died—love and tenderness and hope and something to look forward to. And here——" He gently pushed the little schoolma'am into the arms that Esther reached to her. The woman pulled down his head by a clutch at his arm and sobbed a few words in his ear. He nodded his head and smiled sagely and contentedly. Then he returned to the front of the room and faced the silent people, all of whom were blinking hard their blurry eyes.

"Neighbors," he said, softly, running the brim of his worn hat around and around in his fingers, "the little schoolma'am has found a new mother to-night."



# WITH CUPID AS CHAUFFEUR

BY WILLIAM C. BROWNLOW



"EG pardon, Mr. Keane, sir."

Keane started from a reverie so profound that he had not been aware of the butler's approach. Bragin, the imperturbable, was towering majestically over him, holding in one hand a small silver salver. Keane frowned.

"What is that?" he demanded, irritably. "I thought I left word that I was at home to no one, Bragin? Take the card back and tell that to whomever it is. I'll see nobody—nobody. Understand? And——"

"Beg pardon, Mr. Keane, sir, but it's a letter, sir."

Keane stared incredulously, a light, the glad light of hope, dawning in his eyes. Yet he was arguing with himself: "No, it can't be so, you fool! That'd be too good to be true!" Aloud he repeated, sharply: "A letter, Bragin?"

"Special delivery, sir. Carrier just brought it up from the village, sir. I took the liberty of signing, sir."

"Give it to me!" Keane snatched it from the salver. "By George!" he whispered, exultantly. "It—it can't be! It is!"

Bragin wheeled about and stalked from the dining room, leaving his employer quite alone. Though he was trembling with impatience, still Keane waited until the door had closed; then with a nervous twist of his strong, slender, sensitive fingers he ripped an end from the square envelope. A sin-

gle sheet of note paper, of a grayish hue, shaded with the angularity of a woman's handwriting, shook in his grasp; and simultaneously something rattled on the polished mahogany of the dining table.

The young man saw it and slowly put the letter down, his eyes fixed upon the glittering little object that lay before him—a hoop of yellow gold set with a single, star-like stone, flashing in the candle light. Keane gasped; and then there came an expression of utter, unrelieved misery.

"My ring," he said, aloud. "My ring! She—she's sent it back. Now, you know, this isn't right at all—you know. Ah, Enid, Enid, why did you do it? Why did you do it, little girl?"

His voice broke there, and Keane suddenly collapsed in his chair, pillowing his well-shaped head on the arms which he folded before him. For a long time there was no sound in the vast, gloomy dining room, save the noises of the night that came in with the little breeze through the long windows, and no movement, save the swaying of the curtains, the sputtering of the candles' flames, and the slow heaving of Keane's broad shoulders.

When at length he raised his head, his face was gray and lined with suffering. Deliberately he took up the letter and set himself to its perusal. It was not a lengthy communication, but as he read on, a dull crimson flush mounted to Keane's forehead, and his mouth took on a new look—a firmness,

with the lips, unusually pale, a set, angry line. But he said nothing, and for many minutes after he had ceased reading sat quite motionless, staring vacantly into the shadows at the other end of the room. The flush, however, remained, and the ugly aspect of his jaw was unmodified.

Presently he rose and walked into the adjoining room—the library—where he seated himself at his desk and selected a pen. He did not pause to think what he had best write; what was in his mind to say came freely enough; nor had he time to weigh the advisability of a sentence, to calculate the effect of a phrase. He wrote rapidly, permitting the resentment that was in his heart unreservedly to flow from the nib of the pen. And—what was infinitely worse and less to his credit—Keane meant every word of it all—just then.

The change came only when he had signed his name at the close and had addressed the envelope. Then it was that he took from the upper left-hand pocket of his waistcoat a little miniature, framed in chased gold, with a name, "Enid Argyle," set in small diamonds around the lower rim; and, pausing a moment to look his last upon it, Keane felt his rage subsiding.

Few men could have gazed long upon that face and harbored unworthy emotions. Keane had loved the girl—still loved her, to tell the truth; which, at the time, wild horses could not have dragged from him. It was a bewitching face that looked out, calmly, sweetly, at the man—the face of a girl serene in the knowledge of her charm, and still a face altogether wonderful for its womanly tenderness.

Keane gazed, the hard lines in his face softening, a quieter light showing in his eyes; and before long he was smiling sadly back at the girl.

"No," he whispered, "you didn't mean it, Enid—what you said in that note. You didn't mean it. You were angry, little woman, but—but it's all a mistake, dear. It will blow over; you and I will laugh at this some day when—when we're happy together, Enid. You—why, you can't have known what you

were writing, dear. You wrote in a gust of passion, just—yes, just as I did a moment ago. If you'd only stopped to think, I'd never have my ring back now. You wouldn't have sent it, if you'd stopped to consider, any more than I can send you this—this *thing* here!"

He fingered the letter he had written, staring thoughtfully at it. "No," he admitted, a bit remorsefully, "you'd be a cad, Anderson Keane, to send that to her—a little, petty, low-bred cad. So—you won't send it. You'll put it in your pocket and keep it for a warning, just to remind you of what a hot-tempered hound you are. And in the morning, perhaps you'll take the miniature—and the ring—back to her, and let her make her final choice. Maybe when she's slept over it, my boy, she'll——"

He slipped the note into the addressed envelope, and, with a slight hesitation, put the miniature in with it, placing both in his pocket—that upper left-hand waistcoat pocket; which, as every one knows, is nearest a man's heart.

"Bragin," he said, encountering the butler in the great hallway as he went out from the library, "I wish you'd have the Parrott car brought 'round to the door. I think I'll go for a little ride. No, I shan't want any chauffeur; I'll drive myself to-night. And—and, Bragin!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I'll be late, more than likely."

## II.

The car swung swiftly down the driveway, as if the thing of iron and brass and steel were in a mood attuned unto its driver's. Keane, bending over the steering wheel, bareheaded, a duster flapping about his shoulders, eyes intent upon the winding roadway, felt the motor leap beneath his hand, and was glad; it pleased him to think that something of the unquiet of his own spirit had entered into the great, throbbing heart of the machine, and that it, like himself, was impatient of restraint.

In a fleeting moment, Byrdcliffe had dropped behind and the boundaries of

Keane's estate were passed; in another, it seemed, the village itself had swept to the rear—a fugitive panorama of stark, gabled cottages standing apart on dusky, tree-lined avenues, split by the main street with its garish lights. And then he was out in the open indeed, the Sound glimmering broad upon his right and the templed hills rolling gently up to the left. Keane let out the speed.

The road slipped smoothly beneath the wheels, like a ribbon of dull gold in the moonlight. The Parrott surged on, racing through the still night with barely a sound above the motor's deep, sustained song.

It seemed as though in all the world only Keane and his motor lived and moved. For a full hour the man kept to the Shore Road, meeting no one; and then, on sudden impulse, he swerved inland and drove swiftly up into the hill country—aimlessly, when it came to a choice of ways. Undulating fields of stubble and of ripened grain awaiting the reaper; broad stretches of untilled ground, rocky and sterile; vast expanses of timber, dividing the infrequent farmsteads, all silent and beautified in the moonlight. Now and again the Parrott would boom over an echoing bridge, or the squawk of the horn would make hideous the night as Keane warned some wandering dog from his right of way.

Time passed unregarded by the young man; he kept his face forward, grateful for the dank air that rushed into his nostrils, driven by the gale the car created where there was no wind. And so he blundered on, and into ways that never before had he troubled with the hum of the Parrott's motor or the searching glare of its headlight, into a countryside as familiar to his vision as some foreign landscape. For half an hour a narrow byway held him in its tortuous length, so constricted that he could not have turned the car had he wished to, leaving him no alternative but to go forward. In the end he came out without warning upon a broad highroad, and set the Parrott to the ascent of a hillside long and steep.

At the top he shut off the power and

brought the machine to a halt, himself standing up in the tonneau and casting about for some landmark for a clew to his whereabouts; which he failed to discover. The neighborhood was wild and silent, with never a human habitation in view.

Keane swore softly, reluctant to admit that he had lost his way. Afar a dog bayed plaintively; further still a locomotive whistled its hoarse warning to a distant crossing. Keane sat down and, grasping the lever, started the huge machine downhill. The grade was steep, and the road at the bottom masked in the obscurity of a wood lot; beyond, it stretched out freely, straight and white into the west. There were no curves to cause anxiety; Keane gave the Parrott its head and it gathered momentum, crashing downward, shattering the silence with the roar and fattle of its descent; and the shadows of the trees were about it in a brief instant.

Something happened. Keane hardly knew what. Instinctively he set the foot brake, and the car brought up, quivering, within ten yards. Before that, even, Keane was out and running back, leaving the motor to shake out its heart, if it would. A paralyzing fear numbed his limbs, making it seem hours ere he could cover those few thirty feet or so; and even when that had been accomplished, it was with misgivings that he realized he had done no murder there.

In the roadside ditch an electric runabout lay bottom up, a total wreck. Keane saw nothing else. He flung himself upon it, trying to turn it over by means of his unaided strength, panting with terror and a fear that turned his heart to water; and at the moment a voice apprised him of his error.

"If you please," it said, tremulously, "I am here."

Keane whirled about with a little cry. In a patch of moonlight, on the further side of the road, a woman stood watching him with an apparent composure that was incongruous—a tall young woman, with a figure slender and girlish, in a pongee automobile cloak and with a big hat tied down upon her head



with a misty veil. She was swaying a bit, and Keane saw her hands clasped together tightly, as though for self-restraint—showing that her nerves were not under such admirable control as one might have thought on hearing her even accents.

And Keane knew her.

"Enid!" he cried. "Oh, Enid!" And he went over toward her, with a shameless hope that she might be pleased to faint, or to weep, in order that he might hold her in his arms and comfort her, no matter for how short a time.

But this girl had not the least intention of doing anything of the sort; as became apparent when she drew herself up, very stiffly, and from the really unnecessarily frigid tone which she reassured him.

"Oh," said she, "it's you, is it, Mr. Keane?" And there was a certain discomfiting emphasis on the "Mr." "But you need not be frightened; I'm all right, thank you."

Keane stopped, quite naturally. There were not ten feet separating them; and he could see her forehead pale in the shade beneath the big hat, and her hair that was like spun moonshine, and her eyes that were only deep, tender shadows. And her mouth—he could see that, too—her mouth, that was worth all the world beside to Keane, with its wistfully curved lips. And he longed unutterably to go to her and get down upon his knees in the dust and tell her what a wretched, hulking brute of a chap he knew himself to be, and how he wasn't worthy of her lightest thought, and—therefore—wouldn't she please take back his ring and promise again to marry him?

But of course he couldn't do that and retain any shred of his self-respect, after the manner with which she had greeted him, after the note he had received from her. He could no more than stand there and stammer, in his wonder and bewilderment and his great love for her:

"You—you're not hurt, Enid—Miss Argyle, I mean—truly?"

"I am not hurt, Mr. Keane," said she; and because she had the upper hand,

she laughed. It wasn't a laugh that rang true; rather, it was nervous and discordant. So she threw back her head defiantly and explained with haste, for fear he should take advantage of her agitation.

"I wasn't in the runabout, you see," she told him. "The batteries ran down—here of all places!—and of course the lights went out. So you couldn't see and are not to blame in the least bit, although I did try to warn you. But you were coming down so fast, you know, and I didn't dare go near the machine to use the horn, and the noise must have drowned my voice."

"I didn't hear you," replied Keane, mechanically. "I—I'm sorry. I'm afraid I've ruined your runabout."

She turned out the palms of her hands with an effect of resignation, tinged with an appreciation of the ridiculous. "Oh, utterly," she agreed, lightly. "But it's really of no consequence."

"No, of course not," Keane agreed, in his turn, without a thought as to what he was saying. When he did comprehend his own words, "Oh, I didn't mean that at all," he protested, quickly; "I mean, it does matter a great deal, and I'll send for the machine the very first thing in the morning and have it repaired—or replaced."

"No; I couldn't permit that, Mr. Keane. It's all my fault, and it wouldn't be fair——"

"But," Keane interrupted, rudely—"but how is it that you are here, alone at this time of night, Enid—Miss Argyle?"

The girl paused, lifting her chin a degree higher and eying him very scornfully. "I won't tell," she asserted, calmly.

"You won't?" Keane faltered. "I beg your par——"

"It isn't at all essential that I should account for my actions to strangers or even to mere acquaintances, Mr. Keane."

"Don't!" he pleaded, humbly. "Please don't!"

But she was relentless, according unto the way of a maid with a man when she has him down. "So," she con-

tinued, sweetly, "I shan't answer any questions, if you don't mind, sir." And then his complete despair must have touched her heart, for she added, more kindly: "However, I am going to ask you to be so good as to take me home—since I can't take myself home, now."

"Thanks to my stupidity!" Keane muttered, gloomily. "I'll be very glad to do anything—anything you'll let me, I mean."

She nodded her thanks a thought curtly and swept past him and on down the road to where the motor-car waited, Keane following dejectedly, but artfully quickening his pace in order that he might offer her his hand at the step. The girl hesitated a fraction of a second over that, but in the end rested the tips of her gloved fingers on his palm for one tingling instant, and sprang into the tonneau. Keane climbed in beside her and put his hand to the controller, but stayed it upon a second thought.

"Do you happen to know where we are?" he asked, turning to her.

She regarded him as if weighing his honesty; and Keane, remembering that awful letter he had written in a moment of unreasoning rage, and which was even then resting over his heart, had to avert his face, being unable to endure the steady inspection of her clear eyes.

"Don't you know?" she returned, suspiciously, at length.

"No," he confessed, "I don't. I was lost when—it happened. And so I'll have to ask you to tell me the nearest route home, Miss Argyle."

Again her answer was slow in coming. Plainly, he thought, she disbelieved his statement, true though it was, every word of it; she very evidently thought him capable of deceiving her for his own ends; and he wondered greatly what he had done to deserve such an estimate.

"I don't know," said the girl, calmly. "To be frank with you, I was lost myself. Somehow I mistook the road in the moonlight, and—and so I'm here. But I came that way." And she indicated the road that lay before them. "I suppose that it's the surest way back to

civilization, unless you— Don't you think?"

Keane sighed heartrendingly. "Yes, I guess we'll come to some place we know, after a while," he said, more cheerfully. And he snapped the lever into position, touching the clutch pedal.

As the car began to move on the first speed, the girl bent forward and looked at the carriage clock, the dial of which was as readable in the moonlight as though it had been day. Keane, intent upon the handling of the machine, was conscious of her little start of dismay, and heard indistinctly a most feminine ejaculation.

"Oh, my gracious heavens!" cried the girl.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"The time," she gasped, as if frightened; "it's half after eleven, Mr. Keane!"

"Yes?" The Parrott was gliding forward easily on the first speed, and Keane was at liberty to take his attention from the guidance of it long enough to steal a glance into her face. It was a look of wide-eyed consternation that he saw there, of worryment so palpable that a sympathetic pucker gathered between Keane's own brows. "It is pretty late," he admitted, encouragingly, "but—"

"But? And—Mr. Keane! I've simply got to be home within an hour—by half-past twelve at the latest."

"Well, then, we'll try to make it."

"But can't you, please, go any faster?"

"Surely." Reluctantly Keane pressed down the clutch and opened the throttle as he drew back the lever. The Parrott lurched and struck out for the western horizon. "But what—?" Keane added, over his shoulder.

She had to lean toward him to make her words audible without screaming in his ear, thereby suffering a considerable loss of dignity.

"It's the people—our guests, you know," she explained. "Everyone went over to the Greers' dance this evening, and they'll surely be home by one, at the very latest, and—and what if they were not to find me there?"

"Yes?"—with interest.

"You see, I begged off with a headache——"

"Which you didn't have," he dared to interrupt, smiling mischievously—and smiling for the first time that night. You see, the advantage was with him now; and Keane was just lover enough to be very, very glad.

"Which I didn't have," she assented. "And when they were gone I slipped down and bribed one of the servants to bring the runabout down to the gate and say nothing about it, and—— Oh, can't we go a little faster, please, Mr. Keane?"

Keane shook his head dubiously, musing aloud. "I don't know; it's asking a good deal of this machine. Besides," he didn't seem cast down to recall, "there are the speed regulations, you know."

"But it's so late! And no one will ever know! Just suppose they were to come home early and—and then you were to bring me in at this hour? What *would* they think?"

"I'm sure *I* don't know," Keane comforted her. "Still, you don't care about being arrested, I suppose?"

The girl hesitated. He was right; she had to concede that to herself, at least. But the situation as she saw it was very desperate, indeed—no time for half measures. She had to abandon her citadel of offended hauteur, and Keane was at fault. It was very cruel of him, and she promised herself revenge both sweet and satisfying in the immediate future. But just then there was nothing for her to do, nothing at all, but to yield, to confess her dependence. And, besides, she had been just as much in the wrong as he had, in that dreadful quarrel about the merest trifle. Moreover, it wasn't so very, very unpleasant to give in to Andy Keane, who could be counted upon to wear his victor's laurels with becoming humility.

And so she leaned more near to him and placed upon his sleeve—gently, not to alarm him—one small, pleading hand, at the same time saying softly—so discreetly, in fact, that he all but missed hearing it:

"Andy!"

But, even had he been so unfortunate, Keane's heart would have congratulated him upon her capitulation. He let out the third speed, and later the fourth. Nevertheless, "Hang an auto!" grumbled the ungrateful wretch.

Because, you understand, the management of a motor-car demands both hands of a man and both eyes, particularly when speed is high.

### III.

Some distance ahead a church steeple abruptly poked itself out of a wilderness of trees, standing out cold and white against the skies. Keane knitted his brows thoughtfully, then smiled with satisfaction; he had his bearings again.

"That's Glenville," he announced, motioning with a hand that happened to be disengaged for the time being. "We're on the Old Post Road. I'll have to slow up now, passing through the village."

"Must you?" she urged. "It's so late, and there will be no one in the streets, and it's almost midnight. Can't we chance it?"

"*Well!*" said Keane to himself; but to her, "I shouldn't," he argued. "It's risky. We're within the limits now, and——"

"Are you afraid, sir?"

Keane tried to catch a glimpse of her out of the corner of his eye, and failed miserably. He put his teeth together firmly. "All right," he gave in, doggedly.

Behind him, at that moment, a man rose from a shadow and climbed hastily to the top of a stone wall, where he stood frantically waving a small, bright hand lantern. Naturally, neither Keane nor the girl saw him; otherwise subsequent events might have been ordered differently.

The car bored on with speed undiminished, through the tranquil night; second by second Glenville's church steeple loomed nearer and more near. Keane kept one eye upon it, hoping for the best. It was really very important that no time should be lost. He was very much alive to that necessity. And

the road leading to Greenfields and the Argyles' country place, The Elms, branched off just beyond the church. Once in that highway, a very few additional moments would place Enid in safety upon her own home veranda, and—

And Keane was appalled to observe two shirt-sleeved men dancing madly in the middle of the road, waving battered straw hats and yelling at the top pitch of their lungs. Just beyond them a thin, black line cut across the whiteness of the thoroughfare.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Keane. He had feared just this. "Oh, Lord!" he despaired, putting his foot down hard upon the brake and doing everything in his power to stop ere he ran down the two constables. As it was, he barely missed them. They jumped aside, shouting furiously, just in time; and the Parrott skidded on and into the hempen barrier, straining the rope until it snapped and fell limp beneath the front tires.

A second later Keane was climbing unwillingly out of the tonneau, assisted by a much enraged person who had sprung up on the step of the car and fixed five bony fingers in the back of the young man's collar.

"Come on, naow!" Keane was admonished. "Out with ye! Ain't a-goin' ter stand fer no foolishness. Got ye this time! Ye will vi'late th' speed laws, will ye? Calc'late ye'll think twicet afore ye do it ag'in, young feller. Night in th' lockup will about settle ye."

"Easy, easy!" Keane suggested, mildly. "You don't have to hang onto my collar with that death grip, my friend. I can't get away, you know."

"Ye won't git th' chance; I'll see to that. Got ye where squirmen' won't do ye no good. Held the watch on ye and timed ye to the second. Ye made that last half-mile in forty seconds, an' ye'll pay fer it, too, naow."

"Oh, come, come!" said Keane, pacifically; "it isn't as bad as all that. Your stop-watch is a trifle too enthusiastic. You should get a reliable one."

"Never ye mind; that watch's all right." The speaker released Keane and stood back with arms akimbo, look-

ing the young man up and down with undisguised delight. "Ye'll pay fer breakin' thet rope, too," he chuckled. "Calc'late th' jedge'll make an ex-ample of ye—scorchin' 'raound th' taownship in th' middle of th' night. Naow, ye git back into thet pesky machine and give me and Samu-el here a ride to the jail. Samu-el's my deputy, ye know."

"Hold on," protested Keane. "You're geared too high, my friend. You run faster than you claim my machine did. Now, let's be reasonable. Can't this thing be arranged?"

"Haow d'ye mean?"

Keane ran his hand into his trousers pocket. "Can't I pay my fine now? I'd just as willingly do so, and it will save us all a lot of trouble."

"No; can't be did. Ye got to go afore th' justice of th' peace, and ye may's well make up your minds to thet."

"But how about this lady? She can't run the machine home—"

"Ye bet she can't," chuckled the constable. "Thet snortin' thing's comin' right along with us. 'Ex-hibit A' fer th' prossycution, hey?"

"But—"

"Naow, thet's enough. 'Tain't no use argyin'. Law's law, and ye got to respect it same's other folks, or take your medicine. Ye kin put your lady up at th' hotel, I guess—ef th' landlord isn't asleep."

"Wait a bit. What's the limit of fine here?"

"Twenty-five good American dollars, young feller. Why?"

"Here's a hundred—guarantee for my appearance in court to-morrow morning. Will that satisfy you?" Keane offered the bills, struggling very valiantly not to lose his temper.

"Waal, naow, I don't know but ez thet might do." The constable took the money and counted it over carefully before pocketing the roll. "Samu-el," he said, "ye seen him give it to me, didn't ye, Samu-el? Waal, thet's bribery, Samu-el—what them city fellers calls 'graft.' Calc'late th' jedge'll have somethin' to say about thet, too, when I tell

him. Come 'long to the lockup, naow, and come peaceable."

The constable motioned toward the car, but Keane did not move. He was trembling as violently as the motor, by this time. It was unbearable to contemplate—the night's lodging in the village jail, with the subsequent publication of the incident and the dragging of Enid's name into the affair. What the consequent tattle of a summer colony would find to say about her, Keane did not dare to think.

"This has gone about far enough," he said, gently, but between his teeth. "You understand me?"

"Samu-el," drawled the constable to his assistant, "grab thet smart Aleck. I'll 'tend to th' autymobile and th' woman."

Keane's neck was suddenly embraced by a gaunt, sinewy arm; and the constable himself was bearing down, in the throes of an inspiration. "Hold him tight, Samu-el," said he; "in my capacity as a sworn officer of the law, I'm goin' to search this man. P'rhaps he's a dangerous criminal, seein' ez he's so anxious not to stop with us."

It was the last straw; Keane was reminded of the existence of his letter to Enid—that terrible letter! If it should be read aloud—and he did not doubt that the rustics would greatly appreciate so humorous a matter!

"Enid," he called, clearly, "start the machine!"

To that moment she had not moved; she had seemed fascinated with anxiety. Now abruptly she woke to action, and slipped into Keane's place.

As for Keane, he could not see her; but he trusted to luck and kicked out behind with all the strength of his exasperation. The sharp heel of his shoe came into unexpected contact with a bony shin, and a yell sounded in his ears. He kicked again, encouraged, and managed to break away—but only to find himself struggling in the constable's arms.

The constable was a large man, and strong. He hugged Keane close to his breast, twisted him suddenly about, all but tripped him up, and before he could

recover had thrust his hand into Keane's upper left-hand waistcoat pocket and withdrawn the damning envelope.

"Thought I seen somethin' white in thar," crowed he, holding the young man at arm's length.

Even Enid's miniature was in the yokel's possession—absolutely connecting her with the affair. Keane's face went livid; his eyes blazed. He broke the constable's hold and did several interesting things with surprising celerity.

After an interval he saw vaguely, as in a dream, one constable sitting up in the road and coddling an aching jaw, and one deputy lying flat on his back several feet distant.

But in Keane's own hand, there was the envelope, twisted and grimy and torn, but with its contents intact, together with the miniature which had somehow fallen out in the *mêlée*.

"Enid!" Keane cried, whirling about.

The car was already in motion. Keane ran and jumped, catching the back of the tonneau and lifting himself in. He clambered over to the front seat and sank, exhausted but triumphant, by the girl's side. "Let—let me get there!" he cried, breathless.

"No," she said; "I can manage very well for a while. You sit still and rest."

There was an odd little catch in her voice. She turned and looked Keane full in the face—her own more radiant, more beautiful than ever he had known it. For a single instant their eyes met.

"Oh," she cried, "that was superb! Thank you, thank you—dear!"

And the Parrott fled ever more swiftly, pursued by the chagrined howls of the village constabulary, and bearing at least one ecstatically happy young person; who obeyed orders and sat still and rested and tore a certain letter into excessively minute fragments, which he scattered to the four winds of heaven.

#### IV.

With a total absence of ostentation in its demeanor, very sedately and decorously indeed, the Parrott slipped up

the moonlight-checked driveway of The Elms—a quietly dignified, domesticated automobile, one well-broken, that never for a moment had dreamed of such a thing as shattering a speed regulation or discomfiting the minions of the mighty law.

At the steps it paused. The girl jumped lightly to the ground, sped up the steps and across the veranda and vanished, without a word or a backward glance, into the gloom of the great main hallway. Yet Keane seemed not to consider himself sighted.

In a moment the girl had reappeared.

"It's all right," she assured him, gratefully; "not a soul's home yet, and the servants are all invisible. It's very reprehensible of them"—she smiled—"but—but this once I'm willing to overlook it, Anderson Keane!"

"They're not expecting anyone yet," he said, slowly. "Do you know what o'clock it is?"

"No."

"Half after eleven," he laughed, "to the minute!"

"But, Andy!"

"That carriage clock has been out of gear for I don't know how long," he explained; "but I'd forgotten it, honestly."

"I'm so glad," she declared, in accents that carried conviction.

"And, in view of the earliness of the evening hour," Keane proceeded, "I'm trusting that you'll let me rest on your doorstep for ten minutes."

"It's really wrong," she considered. "But, just for ten minutes, dear."

Keane put away his watch and his hands behind his back, where they would not yield to temptation too readily. Enid had thrown aside her cloak and hat and stood facing him in the moonlight, at a nicely calculated distance, her arms and neck gleaming, her adorable chin well up, her eyes meeting his gaze fearlessly; and glowing deep in them was a light that none but Keane had ever seen.

And still he was not sure. "I want to tell you something," he began; "I want to apologize for what I said and did this afternoon, sweetheart. It was

all my fault, and about nothing at all to begin with; and I deserve a thrashing for it. But—but you won't be hard on me, dear? I can't live without your love, you know."

"Ah, but you are wrong," she contradicted. "The blame was every bit mine, dearest, and—and I've my own confession to make to you. Can't you guess where I was going to-night, in that run-about?"

He smiled a mute negative.

"To you, truly. I—I wrote you a letter, just before dinner, and sent it by special delivery, and—and I was sorry right away and wanted it back."

She was in his arms now. "It's very wonderful," she whispered, "that you should have found me in time. Isn't it?"

"In time?" he asked, blankly.

"Yes. Because I know you haven't received that letter, Andy. Else you'd never have spoken to me again. It—it was a bad, heartless letter. I want you to promise me you'll not read it. Just open it when you get home and take out the ring and burn the letter, unread. You will?"

"Surely, sweetheart!"

"And look!" She lifted one rounded arm and opened a little fist that had been tightly clinched; in the hollow of its rosy palm lay the miniature.

"How did you get that?" he cried. "I thought—"

"You dropped it, Andy, when you climbed over into the front seat; and when we changed, I picked it up from the floor. But"—and she laughed deliciously—"isn't that just like a man? To have fought so bravely for it, and then to have forgotten it altogether!"

"Ah, but then I had you!"

"But you won't forget your promise? Burn that miserable letter. I'm trusting you, Andy, dear. It's just the beginning. I'm going to trust you with all my happiness, with my whole life, so soon, and—I may as well start now."

"The Lord be merciful unto me, a sinner," he murmured, "and make me worthy of your trust, dear heart!"

"But you are!" she breathed—with a woman's sublime faith in man.





## EDITORIAL

While it may be said, from one point of view, that the series of essays on the social side of American cities which has been running in *Ainslee's* during the past eight months, has closed, yet in another sense, they are to be considered as introductory to a much larger subject.

Just what this is, we have purposely refrained from commenting on, for our readers who have followed them would derive greater satisfaction in the final discovery of the vital thought underlying the series.

So far as our knowledge goes, periodical literature contains no parallel to what we have attempted to do in planning this course of essays. There have been, it is true, numberless special articles on disconnected phases of social life in America and elsewhere, interesting and illuminating so far as they went; but they have been, in character, so much like the news in the society columns of the daily papers, that they have served no other practical purpose.

We have thus far exhibited the facts bearing upon society in eight representative American cities, presented by people who, as actual leaders and participants, know what they are talking about. This picture has been completed, but the whole point of our undertaking would be missed if we did not supply the means of estimating the values of the picture.

We begin in this issue a supplementary series designed to give to our readers the material with which to reach their own conclusions on the question naturally suggested by a consideration of this whole subject, namely, "Does it Pay?" Does it pay financially, physically, mentally, morally to be in society? Our readers can weigh for themselves the advantages sought against the expenditure in time, money and physical, mental and moral energy.



ONE is tempted at first sight to pronounce social conditions here and in London wonderfully similar—as far at least as that little set which in both countries we call “smart” or fast, according to our inclination and ethics. In London, as here, we see the same omnipotence of money, the same indifference to the old rules of good manners, the same frenzied desire to be amused, the same awful boredom among the idle. We say, in consequence, a number of true and biting things. Over there we see fortune winning its social way, and we mock at the superstition of an inherited aristocracy; we see a parallel phenomenon here, and allow ourselves a dig at republican institutions.

But in spite of these superficial resemblances, there is the most fundamental of differences between the two societies—the difference between an organized and an unorganized body.

For when one says American society, one means—what? A little circle of people in New York at whom many New Yorkers laugh and whom the best people in Boston scorn? Do we mean the best people in Boston, whose names are unknown to nine-tenths of the country? Or the little group of French descendants in New Orleans, who, though their society is almost as difficult to enter as the court circle in Vienna, would hardly be the object of social ambition

in any other section of the Union? The truth of the matter is that in this country social position in one city confers nothing at all in any other, unless, possibly, we except a certain number of dwellers in New York and Newport, whom the papers delight to advertise. Yet even these, whose names are certainly well known, are rather conspicuous than distinguished; the country studies them, not with reverence, but with curiosity. One cannot, with the best intentions, feel that these people stand for anything in particular, good or bad. Their make-up varies with the season and the condition of the stock market—a haphazard band, held together by a common wish to be amused, no two of them agreeing as to the social importance of any third. This, I take it, is our nearest approach to an organized society.

But when we speak of English society we mean a perfectly definite thing—an established, historic body, so sure of itself that it can afford to admit a small leavening of parvenus without in the least affecting its character. So actual a thing, indeed, is social position in London that it has become for the few favored ones a definite commercial asset, which may be bought and sold. It is well known that there are men and women of the best position in London who will undertake for a consideration to obtain a certain measure of recognition for anyone who has enough money to pay the price. The aspiring parvenu surrenders the reins of government to such a person and foots the bills for

parties which fill his house night after night with people whose names he hardly knows, and who utterly fail to recognize him the next morning in the park; but who, true to their agreement, fling him an invitation to their next crush, content to oblige "dear Hilda" or "Lord Archie," who, it is understood, is going to "get something good out of it."

Such bargains, if sometimes made, would be very difficult to fulfill in this country. In the first place, what American would be willing to pay down hard cash for the privilege of entering the houses of those who, six months hence, may be ruined or discredited? In the second, American hostesses are too independent, or else too uncertain of their own success, to weight their parties with undesirable aspirants, even to oblige a dear friend. Here even for the most fortunate there is an element of uncertainty, a slight struggle to keep at the top. How, where there is no such thing as inherited position, no such thing as admitted superiority, can anyone be sure of leading?

In England, on the other hand, the great bulk of the nation—the English middle class—maintain and solidify the aristocracy by being content to remain outside of it, content to admit social inferiority. The middle class betrays no desire to imitate its beloved aristocracy—that would be to cheapen its value. An English shopkeeper would regard it as undignified, as essentially unfitting, to copy the social customs of his betters; whereas, in this country, we have only to recognize in any community that some form is appropriate or elegant, and it is immediately put in practice by everyone.

Talking once with an Englishwoman—a woman of education and means—I asked, innocently enough, whether she knew one of the English dukes of whom she had just spoken with admiration. The supposition seemed natural, but I found I had quite horrified her. "Oh, no," her answer was; "middle class people like myself would have no opportunity of meeting him." Nothing could have been more simple and self-respect-

ing than her manner; I could not but admire it, and yet to the free-born American there is something shocking in such an admission. Did she really believe that there was an inherent difference not to be overstepped between herself and a peer, or was she merely perfectly content with a system that divided sheep and goats without concerning itself with the individuals?

Thinking it over, I came to the conclusion that class distinctions are shocking to Americans because we cannot get away from the idea that they are wholly artificial, as indeed in this country they must be. In general, we are descended from the same people, engaged in the same occupations; we speak and look alike. But over there it is very different. The different classes are descended from different ancestors, engaged in different pursuits, and nothing is more striking than the difference in physical appearance between the well born and the lower classes. This last assertion must be taken in its most general sense. We have all of us seen bearers of historic English names who hardly came up to our conception of the part, but go into any drawing room filled with the aristocracy, and for the most part you will see a body of men and women handsomer, more intelligent and even larger than an equal number of "the people." This probably has much to do with the tenderness the middle classes feel for their superiors.

Go to the park in London and watch the rendezvous that takes place about certain chairs, when church is over, Sunday after Sunday. You will see some great people—men and women whose names are to be conjured with; and yet the great English public, knowing them and admiring them, never thinks of such a thing as invading their privacy. Fancy such a condition of things here. Suppose that it were generally known that certain of our much advertised social leaders were in the habit of occupying certain benches in the Central Park at certain hours, how long would it be before an eager, pressing crowd would be about the place? There was not so very many years ago

a time when in Fifth Avenue, after church on Sunday, one met a long succession of New York's best people, but now among the good-looking, well-dressed crowd one would have hard work to pick out a social dignitary, even if such a one were there.

In this country, if prominent people desire privacy, they must build it up about themselves with great pains; over there it is accorded them as a right; it is part of the respect felt for them, a respect which over here has been replaced by curiosity. The newspapers, it is true, find it necessary to fill columns with the doings of our "smart" people, columns which are read eagerly, but not devoutly. It is the old story of the man who asked what the inhabitants of his native village had said when they heard he had been elected governor. "Oh, they didn't say anything," was the answer; "they just laughed."

Certainly, we take a great interest in our "great ladies," but we always allow ourselves the privilege of laughing. And the interest is not in something unknown, in creatures of a clay apart, but rather owing to our belief that we ourselves might be in exactly the same position. I always fancy that the crowd of women about a church door at any notable wedding is drawn together not by their sense of difference from the bride, but rather by a universal feeling that they or their daughters may some time be in her place.

The relation of politics to English society is very notable. Here, except perhaps in Washington, which is hardly a characteristically American community, there is no connection whatsoever between social position and government; but in England, where a seat in the House of Lords is the main perquisite of title, the situation is reversed. Another result, strange to republican eyes, is the prestige conferred by land. The first idea of the maker of a great fortune in England is to own land, to buy a great estate, to be visited by the county families, and to be returned to Parliament. Indeed, there are some historic places which of late years have passed out of the hands of the families who have

owned them for generations, which of themselves assure social consideration. Here we hardly know who owns land and who does not; and the social struggler had much better buy a palace on the park than the greatest domain in the country.

I speak of a palace, but anyone who has been in London realizes how much larger the houses there are, or, rather, how many more large houses there are. We must remember, however, that the requirements of the average English family—the inevitable schoolroom, the servant's hall, the pantries, the housekeeper's room—things that we regard as luxuries for the very rich, are there essentials to those of moderate means. On the other hand, the housing of the servants themselves in some of the best houses is inferior to that which in this country people of straitened circumstances would think of offering their servants. In more than one good house in London, the butler sleeps on a shelf in the pantry—an idea singularly repulsive to American notions.

To the American settling in London, nothing is more confusing than the attitude of English servants, their contempt for the slightest consideration of their feelings, and their fury at the least infringements of their rights. At first sight, it seems that, in spite of their dignity, they accept extraordinarily small wages, but the American finds house-keeping in London quite as expensive as in New York, for not only is the work so specialized that an immense number of servants is required to do it, but they consume a great deal of time and food in five meals a day, which is considered their right. Class distinctions below-stairs are regarded much more scrupulously than above; and the unfortunate mistress of a house has to understand the grade of everyone she employs, from the housekeeper to the scullery maid. Woe betide her if she confuses an upper and a lower servant, or gives an order to the wrong one. An American woman married to an Englishman and settled in London told me that when she first came there she had installed a dumb-waiter, in the hope of saving

trouble to both her cook and her butler. At the end of a month she found it unused, and on inquiring learned that as it was not the traditional duty of either a cook or a butler to send such a thing as a dumb-waiter up and down, both refused to touch it, and her food continued to be carried by hand from her remote kitchen. Trouble was nothing to them in comparison to the danger of compromising their position.

Another terror is added to house-keeping over there, too, by the fact that every guest who comes to stay brings a maid or a valet, all of whom have to be lodged and fed with just the proper consideration—a consideration varying according to the social position of the employer, a "duke's gentleman" being quite as great a person downstairs as the duke is up. The valets add to their other duties that of waiting on their masters at table. There are many houses where the gentleman who does not bring his servant can hope for very little attention at meals, and the lady who comes without her maid may be thankful if she can get her dresses hooked by a passing housemaid; her hostess' maid is not expected to render the slightest assistance.

Personal service in England is carried to a much greater extent than it is here. I know, for instance, of one nobleman—and there may be many more—who never troubles himself to carry such a vulgar commodity as money. He pays a large salary to his cousin—who, I need hardly say, is himself a gentleman, according to the rigorous standards—to go before and after, paying not only large bills, but all small tips, fees and cab fares. When this peer desired to take a house at Ascot for the race, not only did his cousin engage the house and the servants, but even assembled a party of suitable guests, so that his patron had nothing to do but walk into the house when he was ready and out again when he wished. In this country there are not many men who would wish to surrender so completely the details of their lives, and if they did, how few could be found to fill the position that this gentleman's cousin was glad

to accept! I have known of only one position at all similar in this country, and that, by the way, was filled by an impecunious Englishman of good birth.

The English attitude toward all luxuries is one that repays study. We say at once that the general standard in this respect is lower; the women's clothes, the horses and carriages, the opera house, the average entertainment do not compare in extravagance with ours. Yet to almost every one of these generalizations we must make exception. For instance, it is true that the average Englishwoman spends little on her dress. Twenty-five pounds a year is thought enough for an unmarried woman of good position, and yet on occasions they can outdo anything we imagine. The first time I ever went to Ascot, I remember my utter bewilderment at the splendid, almost spectacular, dresses of the smart Englishwomen there. And, at the risk of stretching a point, I think the same thing might be said of their beauty. Here you will see more pretty faces in a day than you see in a year in England; but when you *do* see a beautiful Englishwoman, you never forget it—she is nobly, healthily, exuberantly beautiful, as our women are not.

As for their entertainments, they are not so luxurious in many ways as ours, they are certainly not so dependent for their success upon their material aspect. Every function does not display the same uniformity of gold plate and hot-house fruit that we have grown to expect over here. Yet when we come to inquire, we find the humiliating fact that there are certain things with which we cannot provide our guests in perfection, because we cannot buy them here; the best has gone to London. Such things as wines, cigars and coffee can be bought in London of a quality of which we know nothing, and at prices that even the extravagant American public will not pay. It seems almost incredible, but merchants are all agreed that over here we will not pay for the very best; a good article at a high price we will consume, but the best at the highest has no market. The explanation is,

I suppose, that we have not as yet any great body of connoisseurs; we have numbers of people who like good things and will pay for them, but over there it is part of a gentleman's education to know the best.

While we are on the subject of entertainments, I should like to notice an English custom which seems to me excellent, although it has never found favor over here. In London there are always a certain number of large, furnished private houses which are rented night after night for the purposes of entertaining. Here we save ourselves trouble by going to one of the large hotels or restaurants, where the giving of such parties is perfectly understood; yet there is something very delightful in the atmosphere of a private house.

The greatest difference of all, however, between the social life in the two countries, is in the makeup of society. In the first place, over there it is not, as here, a society of the young, or, at least, of those who still appear young. Here we regard society, visiting and entertainments as the natural but frivolous relaxation of youth; it is arranged upon as the necessary meeting ground of all ages. The rigid age limits which we draw about our parties are unheard of there. Dancing is only a small part of a ball. We should not know whether to call it a ball or a reception, so many of the guests have come with no other idea than to talk to their old friends. Even at dinners, in England, a girl is never asked without her chaperon, a custom which necessitates at once a mingling of ages. I cannot but think that this makes a society infinitely more interesting, at least for the young. There is something distinctly provincial in our division of youth and age, as if a young man could have nothing to say to a dowager; as if a girl must be bored by a brilliant man, merely because he happens to be old enough to be her grandfather.

Then, too, our society is, as we have so often been told, a society of women—controlled, that is, by women whose husbands and brothers, whether they

join in it or not, are really absorbed in other and, as they feel, more important interests. In England this is not true; it is, as its political basis demands it should be, a society of men.

We can hardly imagine the difference made by a large body of men whose daylight hours are not all filled by occupations essentially unsocial. Over here the number of men not engaged in business is increasing, but we should not expect to find our most important in this rank. Not to be in business in this country means generally to be doing nothing at all, but in England either politics or the management of a great estate is a serious and creditable occupation. London society is much less bounded in hours than ours is. It is possible there for men to ride, to visit, and even to lunch as our men have very little time to do.

The result is not only a different condition, but a difference in the men themselves. The current idea of an Englishman—stiff, reserved, unapproachable—is singularly mistaken, or applies only to the Englishman in alien surroundings. Among his intimates he is a simpler creature than the American, more boyish, more easily amused. And I am inclined to think that his leisure—the easier and more assured conditions of his life—has something to do with making him so. I am certain it has something to do with making Englishmen so much more ardent and persistent as lovers than our men are. They may not make such indulgent husbands, but there is about their love-making a fire and a determination that over here we do not obtain—do not perhaps desire. This is one reason, too little considered, why American girls so often marry Englishmen; they are taken off their feet by the violence of the siege laid to their affections. Flirtation is, over there, a much more serious thing than it is here. The long, harmless, mild affairs between young people who might perfectly well marry if they wanted to, affairs which are such a familiar feature of American life, and which I can only describe under the generic title of “dangling,” are there practically un-



known. They are almost inconceivable to the British mind.

It seems to me, too, that the affairs between married people are on a very different basis in London. At the risk of appearing over-innocent, I must confess to a belief that in this country many of the affairs over which the gossips shake their heads are, as a matter of fact, perfectly harmless, are of the same type as the "dangling" above referred to among the unmarried, and mean, on the part of those concerned, only a pleasure in each other's company, and intentions so far removed from evil that the whisper of a little mild gossip about them strikes them only as absurd. But in England the situation is not the same. Englishmen are not likely to be content with intellectual sympathy and a cup of tea, nor Englishwomen either, perhaps. Divorce, as it exists in this country, is unquestionably an evil, but there is a greater one, and that is a tolerant attitude toward love affairs in a country where divorce is rare. One cannot go about in London without becoming aware of the existence of certain long-standing relations which in this country would have led to at least one divorce years ago, but which are treated there with almost as much respect as a marriage. If any defense is possible of our system of divorce, it is to be found in the cool acceptance in another country of such affairs as these, an acceptance which allows the two to be asked about together with as much certainty as if they were a married couple.

We might as well, I think, admit the fact that we are so often charged with, and take the advantages with the disadvantages of being, as a nation, cold.

I remember once hearing a Washington woman, who had watched many young Englishmen come and go at the legation, describe the gradual change that came over their judgment of American girls. An Englishman's first idea of an American girl is that she is the most flirtatious, the most approachable, and the most easily subjugated of her sex. Nothing could be smoother sailing. And then suddenly the fact begins to dawn on him that he is not advancing

at the rate that the first impetus promised, that all her interest in his affairs, all her willingness to see him day after day, has absolutely no significance, that very likely she has been engaged to some one else all the time that he has been debating her eligibility; that she is, in short, one of the coldest little beings in the world. It is a healthy experience for an Englishman, for in his native country there is no doubt that a man, a man as such, is at a premium. The law of primogeniture works badly for the daughters of the family, who, at their father's death, are neither left well off nor yet allowed to work for their living like the younger sons. Marriage is the only way in which a woman of good birth can assure herself of a home. It is almost impossible that this fact should fail to make itself felt in society. To marry is a legitimate ambition, and no offer is to be lightly refused. This is hardly the attitude of our young women, whose very indifference must, I am sure, be a charm to men accustomed to being run after.

No one will deny that, domestically, woman's position in England is very much less desirable than it is here. From the schoolroom they are taught to consider themselves the inferiors of their oldest brother, who is some day to stand in his father's shoes; and I have again and again seen English girls get up to give a chair to their brother, the future head of the family. That men brought up like this will betray something of the same attitude in their treatment of their wives is only to be expected, and to the American eyes they do betray it. To our mind an Englishman's treatment of his wife is marked by selfishness; while by them actions that seem the merest courtesy are quoted as terrible examples of petticoat government in America. English people will tell you that over there husbands and wives are much more companions to one another than they are here; that men have time and women aptitude for sport; whereas they say that in this country a man works so hard that he has no time to give to his wife. It is undoubtedly true that an Englishman

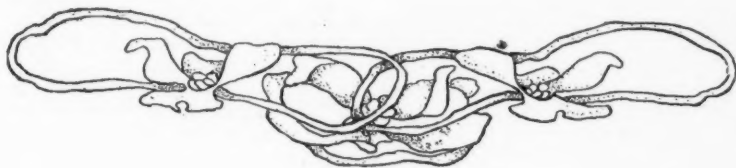
can be with his wife if he wants to, and that an American can't; married couples in both countries are a good deal separated; but for my part, I think the English wife who is left at home half the year while her husband fishes in Norway, or shoots in the Rockies, is in less enviable position than the American wife whose husband when he *does* get uptown is at least eager to be with her.

On the other hand, from a social point of view, women have much to compensate them in England. There is no position in the world to be compared with that occupied by a small—a very small—number of women in London, women at the head of great houses, who by their personality are able to draw the most important men about them, whose families have been related for generations with everything important in English history; whose drawing rooms are

the rallying point for their party, and who seem as important to English government as the cabinet itself. We have nothing to offer a woman of this kind, not even the White House.

English society, with its assurance and its tradition, is for its inner circle a wonderfully delightful one. The American girl who marries an English peer is getting something her own country could not give her, and, however large the fortune she brings, is making a fair bargain.

The great objection to social ambitions in this country is the difficulty of knowing when they are attained. There is no doubt in England; social position is a definite thing, with all the privileges, the prestige and responsibility belonging to superiority. Whether this is an advantage or a disadvantage it would be hard to say—it is at least the keynote to the differences between the two societies.



## FEBRUARY

'TIS February where the warm south blows,  
 And the blue sky laughs sunshine down the snows—  
 The soft, warm snows, mere feathers from the wing  
 Of Winter flying northward. Now the Spring  
 Comes tiptoe softly, light as fairies' trip,  
 With sidelong glance, and finger on her lip,  
 And the first violet, bold of heart, yet shy,  
 Shakes off his cap of green as she goes by—  
 And now on leafy hedges, softly blows  
 The folded ruby of the April rose!

MARGARET HOUSTON.



# IN THE INTEREST OF ART

BY THEODOSIA GARRISON



TERRENCE caught at the girl's arm as she passed him, and swung himself in pace with her down the bustling avenue.

"Well, I call this luck," said he, "to stand upon a corner and say to one's self: 'Really I *must* call upon Cornelia this afternoon, or the dear girl will be crying her eyes out,' and then to have you suddenly gallop—that describes your pace exactly—into sight and save me the trouble. I call it very good of you; on a half holiday, too. Where shall we lunch?"

The girl laughed. Her laughter banished the tiny lines of worry between her gray eyes and the perplexity in the eyes themselves.

"Hello, Terry," she said. "I'm glad it's only you. I thought for a moment I was grasped by the stern hand of the law. Don't think, however, I am glad to see you. I have had a story simmering in my brain all the morning, and I'm walking to get it to boiling point. Do you notice a feverish glow in my eyes? Well, you should. I'm looking for a hero."

"Heavens!" said he. "How immodest! I wonder you admit it."

"For my story," she continued. "I want to find a new type—there's always a chance of meeting one in a crowd. I'm tired of making Arabella fall in the arms of the brawny Westerner with the Apollo profile, who has a heart of gold

and defective grammar, or Blanche succumb to the sallow gentleman who combines a taste for strong drink with a brilliancy that makes sparks fly from his hair. I want something new; a big, handsome, strong, clever man; or, at least, one that looks so. I had every idea of meeting him this morning."

"Well," said he, modestly, "haven't you?"

"Not at all," she said, promptly. "And I'm going home to invent him accordingly."

"Not until you've lunched," he said. "Have something to invent him on properly. I know what your lunch would be if you went home. Heaven knows how you girls in studios manage to do anything on the stuff you eat. Is it sarsaparilla and oyster crackers to-day or breakfast food and a pickle?"

"It would be a dinner of herbs and contentment, at any rate," she retorted. "But if you insist on stalled ox and contention, so be it. I wish you would help me invent my hero, but you cannot—you have no ideas—that is why you are on a newspaper."

"Try me on a heroine," he suggested. "I have one in my mind's eye that will make your hero look small. Across the festive board I will impart her to you."

Once at the festive board, represented by a table in a cozy corner of the gloomy little French restaurant that Terrence affected, where madame, the cashier, beamed at him expansively from her high stool, and the only other occupants of the room, two bearded foreigners,

absorbed in a game of chess, nodded at him as he passed, his mood became critical.

"Cornelia," he demanded, as he served the omelet, "how long have I known you? Not only in the days when we played in our childhood's happy home in Illinois, but since you followed me to New York. I don't mean by that that you pursued me, for my pride still revolts at the fact that you didn't recognize me when I presented myself before you, in the firm conviction that you would burst into tears and call me by my first name. Four years ago, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Cornelia. Her tones expressed curiosity. "Why?"

"Because, my dear child," he said, blandly, "emboldened by long acquaintance, I venture to tell you that your hat is entirely over one ear and you have a smudge on your chin. Thank you, that is much better. Another thing; you look tired, tired to death, and you're in a blue mood—which is rarer than a blue moon. You're working too hard. All that interviewing stuff, and the stories in between, are too much. You are getting thin as a postal card."

The lines between Cornelia's eyes deepened. To be tired and blue is bad enough, without having the one person from whom you are struggling to conceal those facts comment volubly upon them. Being denied tears, she took refuge in crossness.

"For goodness' sake, let me alone, Terry. I was never better in my life, and I haven't enough work to keep me busy. You seem to take delight in going out of your way to say disagreeable things. Small wonder I'm looking for a new sort of man to write about. Now my hero would die before he would tell a woman that she had a smudge on her chin. I wonder what your heroine would reply under the circumstances."

"Oh," said he, "but my heroine couldn't possibly have a smudge on her chin. Coffee in a very large pot, please," he said to the waiter.

He poured it silently into the thick, white cup and proffered it to the bristling Cornelia. "And while we're on the

subject," he continued, amiably, "let me tell you that I think that hero of yours a pretty poor sort. Imagine his poor wife going about smudgy all her life because he was too much of a coward to politely convey the fact to her that he liked her better with a clean face. Now my heroine would fly to Sioux Falls under circumstances of that sort."

"I can imagine her," said Cornelia, hotly.

"Oh, no, you can't," he said, softly. "Or, at least, if you can, you can't express her."

There seemed a blur of gentle reminiscences in his eyes as he held a match to his cigarette.

"Suppose for art's sake, Cornelia, for the sake of your story—you don't mind an old friend saying that just a trifle more art in your stories wouldn't be a detriment, do you?—suppose I tell you my idea of a real heroine, and you can paint the young person you have in mind. We'll take turns at it."

"You mean that we will be simply describing our ideals," said Cornelia.

A curious prescience in her heart made her shrink from the game as she might from the hearing of evil tidings.

"However," she reflected, "even in the interest of art one is not called upon to tell the absolute truth. It is bad enough to acknowledge it to one's self."

"Our ideals!" he repeated. "That is a lovely word. It makes me feel sixteen. But I'm not going to paint an ideal. My heroine is real, not a whipped cream angel on the back of a Christmas card. Suppose you begin, Cornelia. Externals first, because, moralists to the contrary, they are the things that count most. What does your young Lochinvar look like?"

As he refilled her coffee cup, Cornelia studied him carefully, quite as though she did not have him by heart already. Terrence was tall and wore his clothes carelessly. His nondescript-colored hair was touched with gray. His clean-shaven face, with its fine bones, was characterized by a gentle mouth and determined chin. His eyes were kindly and of no particular color, but his smile

was a thing that men might warm their hearts by.

Cornelia looked resolutely into space and began:

"He is not tall," she said; "of course, I don't mean that he is short, but he is not long drawn out, if you understand that."

"I can grasp the fact that he is not a dachshund, if you mean that," he said.

"Don't interrupt, please," she said. "He is dark and his hair is thick and black and curly—that is, it isn't flat on his head, as though it were glued, and he is broad-shouldered and strong—"

"And sings bass at the Metropolitan Opera House," he interrupted, "at a thousand dollars a night. I have seen him. You neglected the fact that he has a beard. I beg your pardon. Please go on."

"There is nothing more to say about his appearance," said Cornelia, coldly. "I'm telling you the truth. I'm sorry if you choose to think it funny. As for the rest, he is courteous and chivalrous, and, yes, serious. He doesn't turn everything into a joke. He—"

She stopped suddenly and turned her attention to her coffee. "It's your turn," she remarked presently, with a delightful assumption of placid interest. "Bring on your heroine, Terry."

Terrence lighted another cigarette leisurely. That he was enjoying himself immensely was not visible in his eyes; they seemed gently pensive.

"Cornelia," he said, "I regard you with admiration. No other story writer in the world would dare to make a stout, bearded mulatto the hero of a story. Incidentally, he doesn't in the least resemble the hero of your last story, does he?"

"She is blond, I suppose," said Cornelia, hastily. There were reasons to avoid the appearance of the hero of her last story.

He studied Cornelia's brunette coloring carefully. "Of course," he assented, as though agreeing to a foregone conclusion. "She is a blond, all roses, red and white, and her hair is the color of daffodils, and she arranges it so softly, and yet so neatly, that it is a joy to see.

No little tags and ends dangling over her temples and ears. And she is not tall. I quite concur in your dislike for tall people—and she is dimpled and round, and not at all clever."

"And you find her," said Cornelia, brusquely, "in a toy store marked: 'All these dolls—\$1.98.'"

"But the delight of her is," he continued, blandly, quite as though no interruption had occurred, "her calm, her peacefulness, her utter repose from repartee and epigram. Bless her, it's a task for her to write a letter, and she would only understand a story at, perhaps, the third telling."

Cornelia stared at him. Her unhappiness had put color in her cheeks and rage in her eyes. He regarded her absently as she pulled on her gloves and straightened her hat in the small mirror by the table. She noticed miserably that her brown hair was tumbling in little rings about her ears. Ah, well, what did it matter? Her hair wasn't the color of daffodils—she thanked Heaven for it, lying.

"I have always understood," she ventured, "that very clever men are unaccountably attached to these insipid, lifeless idiots you describe, but I never guessed that you—"

"Were so clever," he said, deprecatingly. "Thank you, Cornelia."

He helped her with her coat reluctantly.

"So soon, Cornelia?" he said. "And I had just begun, too. There are a great many more things about her I wished to tell you, and sympathetic listeners are hard to find. I always like to talk with a person who agrees with me."

Cornelia maintained a stony silence until they reached the street. At the last moment, as her car came in sight, she relented. Dear old Terry! He deserved the best in the world, and all the martyr in her declared he should have it. Why should she be furious because he had been honest? She held out her hand with a smile that did credit to the wiles of womankind.

"Terry," she said, "bring her to see me."

He grasped her hand warmly as he

helped her board the car. "Thank you, Cornelia," he said, feelingly. "Depend upon it, I will—the very first evening you can arrange with your mulatto friend. And to think," he added, ecstatically as he watched the car disappear—and the look on his face was not at all what it had been a moment before, but an expression made equally of tenderness and triumph—"to think that I have been sitting up o' nights and fuming by day trying to steal one bit of the information she has just given me!"

He glanced at his watch. "I'll give her just twenty minutes to think it over," he decided.

Cornelia found the studio deserted, which was well, for one does not weep comfortably in company. However, she did not weep instantly. She pulled off her gloves and hat and sat down resolutely at her desk, but two faces seemed to look up from the paper to the utter devastation of her ideas; one was that unlovely bearded creation of her own. She laughed miserably at the thought of how decidedly her door would be barred, if by any chance he presented himself in the flesh. The other face was not unlovely. It was like roses, red and white, and it was not at all insipid. It was a face that any reasonable man might love at sight. Cornelia's own face dropped into her hands as she reflected.

The telephone bell in the hall rang loudly. Cornelia gave it no attention

whatever beyond a start. It rang again insistently, and she answered it without enthusiasm. Her "hello" might have been a voice from the tombs.

"Cornelia! Is this you, Cornelia?" said a voice. "Yes? I want to say something to you. You didn't give me a chance this morning."

"She has accepted him," thought Cornelia. "She has——"

"Cornelia," the voice continued, "you're a wonderful liar, a beautiful one, but I flatter myself that I am even more of an artist in that line than yourself."

Something in Cornelia's heart suddenly and wonderfully burst into song, but her tone was frigid.

"Did you call me up to tell me this?" she demanded.

"Not at all," said the voice, reproachfully. "What I really called you up for, Cornelia, is to ask you to marry me. Will you?"

"Yes," said Cornelia, promptly, and instantly hung up the receiver. Her apparition in the hall mirror regarded her with amazed and wondering eyes.

Cornelia went back into the studio. There was a wide window there and she betook herself to it hastily. In her eyes was less of rapture and of the joy of dreams fulfilled than a certain calculation. She was wondering how long it would take a young man in a hurry to come from Twenty-second to Fifty-eighth Street.





# A QUESTION OF TRUTH

BY ERNEST C. THURSTON

SIR PIERCE TRENCH chalked his cue with a certain amount of vicious obstinacy.

"I don't care what you say," he ejaculated, "there is such a thing as simplicity in women; and simple women are to be found."

Anthony Meldrum seated himself while his host added an odd thirty to his score.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, as Sir Pierce paused after an elaborate cannon—"do you mean to tell me that there exists a woman who will say her prayers at night, after she's put up her hair, and in the morning before she's looked in the glass?"

Sir Pierce took his next shot before he replied.

"Plenty, I should think; besides, is that the essence of simplicity?"

Meldrum knocked the ashes from his cigar into the open grate.

"It's one of the first simple things we're taught as children," he replied. "I'm old, but I haven't forgotten that. Oh, no, my dear fellow, simple prayers, simple truths, simple lives and simple women went into the social ark in pairs at the beginning of the century; then came the flood of notoriety, and the whole show sank. There's no Mount Ararat for those who desire to be no-

torious. I'm quite aware that there are women still who pray—but what do they pray for? Immunity from such affections of the skin as will ruin their complexions; supplications that such and such a horse may win the Cæsarevitch; and a prayer for fine weather during Henley week, because their frocks are to be creations on that particular occasion. That's not simplicity. Before she's fifteen a woman's a child, from whom you expect nothing; before she's thirty she's a diplomatist, from whom you get more than you look for; and before she's dead—she's forgotten."

Sir Pierce might have been amused, but he was an Irishman, and the dry, satirical humor of his guest, an Englishman to the blood in his veins, did not appeal to him. Moreover, he was heated in his argument. Living for the greater part of every year, as he did, in the little village of Clogreen, where simplicity was the very atmosphere that surrounded Castle Trench, his national pride was hurt at the calm announcement that simplicity was a quality not to be found among the educated classes of to-day. It was not a statement that he could permit to pass without challenge, and so he threw himself into the argument against the stolid, methodical mind of his English friend, with more heat of contradiction than deliberation of attack.

"It's quite evident," he retaliated, "that you don't move much outside your own set. I'm afraid you're something of a bigot, old chap."

"No, I'm not that," replied Mel-

drum, lightly. "Last year I went to Australia intentionally to rough it, in order to knock off some of the smell of scent that hangs about a drawing room. Bigotry's one of my two antipathies—credulity's the other."

Sir Pierce returned from the table, and marked on his score.

"I suppose you wouldn't believe me, then," he tried to say, casually, "if I told you that I knew a woman who still tells the truth, though she's well over twenty, who lives a perfectly simple, sunbonnet sort of life, and I know is full of the sentiment of romance?"

Meldrum rose to his feet, and chalked his cue carefully preparatory to playing. It was noticeable, in their choice of cues, that while Sir Pierce had selected one with a broad tip, that taken by Meldrum had as fine a point as was possible.

"Well, I should want to see her, test her and prove her," he said, as he leaned over the table, "before I even began to consider the possibility of such a thing."

He stood up and faced his host, having left his shot still untaken.

"If you want to run a miracle show nowadays, Trench," he remarked, "you'll have to hire a most artistic booth, get a very large drum and a strong man to beat it. You'll have to spend a heap of money on advertisement and the subversion of the press, and if it's really authentic you may as well be perfectly resigned to an utter failure."

He returned to his former position and took his shot, the balls running into so suitable a position after he had scored, as to indicate the opening of a substantial break.

"Where am I to see this lady?" he asked, rechalking his cue in anticipation.

"She lives here—in Clogreen."

"Really? Unmarried, of course?"

Sir Pierce hesitated. "Oh, no—she's—"

Meldrum interrupted with a short laugh.

"My dear boy," he said, quickly, "before she's wedded, ignorance may make

a woman simple. But marry her, and you thrust her through a turnstile that moves only one way. What is the name of this modern miracle?"

"Mrs. Charterys."

Meldrum looked up sharply from his stroke.

"Charterys?" he said, in a quiet surprise, and then he repeated it to bring the sound more familiarly to his senses. "Charterys? Was she in Australia, by any chance?"

Sir Pierce looked apprehensively at his friend.

"Yes," he replied. "Why? Did you meet her?"

"No. I heard about her and her husband—more particularly the husband. Met him, in fact."

There was a strong tone of consideration in Sir Pierce's voice when he replied.

"Don't say anything about it to her—or anyone," he said, quietly. "They didn't hit it off well together, you know; he was a cad, and she—well, I've told you what she is, and since he died she's never spoken about him."

"Oh! she's a widow now, then?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

Mental calculations were not Sir Pierce's strong point. "Well, let me see," he said, considering. "They went away from here about four years ago; then I think she returned—after two years, or a little over it. That's it, she's been a widow for nearly two years and a half."

Meldrum looked at his host in placid surprise, and a smile lingered round the corner of his mouth.

"Oh," he said, quietly, "two years and a half? Funny I should have heard of her husband being alive, and more than two months ago. He was in Ballarat."

Sir Pierce jumped to his feet.

"That's a lie!" he said, thickly. And then, seeing his mistake in Meldrum's eyes, he altered his meaning. "You've been told a lie," he added. "It can't be true."

Meldrum took infinite care over the cannon he was making. When it was completed he looked up slowly.

"If you'd had the sense," he remarked, "to tell me you were in love with the lady yourself, I should have dropped the matter a quarter of an hour ago. That's forty-one to go," and he moved slowly over to the other side of the room for the long rest.

This remark sobered Sir Pierce.

"Who told you I was in love with her?" he asked.

"My dear fellow," Meldrum replied, as he returned to the table, "you and I are the best friends in the world. Hadn't we better drop this subject where it is? It's gone quite far enough already."

But Sir Pierce's mind was disturbed, and he walked up and down the billiard room.

"Yes, it's gone far enough," he said, agitatedly; "it's gone too far to be dropped. Now it'll have to be worked out to the end."

Meldrum laid down the rest and came across to his friend, laying his hand affectionately on his shoulder.

"My dear old chap," he said, quietly, "half the women in this world aren't worth thinking about, and the rest are married. I had no notion of this business. I told you that—or I shouldn't have pushed it. I may have made a mistake; it's quite possible."

"Mistake!" echoed Sir Pierce, disconsolately. "Do you think that that's going to satisfy me?"

Meldrum turned away with a gesture of impatience.

"Do you mean that it's got as far as that?" he asked. "Has she encouraged you? Has she dragged you on as far as—as—engaging yourself?"

Sir Pierce turned quickly, with the rankling sense in his mind of an implied insult.

"Dragged me on? Encouraged me?" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "Haven't I told you just what sort of a woman she is—as simple as the—the sun, and as free from that sort of thing as she can possibly be? Encouraged me! Why, she's so reticent about herself that, up to the present, I haven't had the courage to tell her what I think of her."

"Courage!" Meldrum took up the

rest again. "Look here," he said, playing carelessly and ending the break, "do you mean to tell me she has gone on letting you think her husband was dead—telling you he was dead——"

"Telling me! Who the devil said she's told me? Since she returned from Australia, she has never said a word about him, good, bad or indifferent."

"Then how do you know he's dead? Does she infer it in a subtle manner by wearing weeds?"

"No—hang it! I told you she was not up to the artifices of the ladies who practice their spells on the men in your set. She wears black, not weeds, but then she always did wear black—before she was married——"

"I see; she knows what suits her."

"If you like. But she's never worn weeds; everyone deduces naturally from that that she is not one of those women who simulate a grief they don't possess, and we respect her for it."

"Then how the deuce do you know she's a widow?" Meldrum asked, almost exasperated into losing his placidity.

"How?" Sir Pierce was becoming quieter. "Well—there's a Miss Butler, a sort of maiden aunt of mine, who lives here in Clogreen, at Rose Garland Cottage. She's a great friend of Mrs. Charterys. They always kept in touch with each other when she was out in Australia. One day—about six months before Mrs. Charterys returned—she told us all that Dick Charterys was dead, said Mrs. Charterys would be returning to Anesk, here, where she lives, in a few months' time, and broke it as nicely as she could that the marriage had been a failure, and that Kathleen—Mrs. Charterys—would no doubt be very glad if she never heard his name mentioned again."

"And so Mrs. Charterys has never been put to the inconvenience of saying whether he is alive or not? Are you going to take her on that risk, old chap? Is it worth it? Just think! Husband number one turns up, probably in rags, undoubtedly drunk—what are you going to do? You'll be twice as fond of her by that time. For all they say, mar-

riage makes a closer bond of affection than is generally granted to it. It has a nasty habit of making your heart soft in uncomfortable places. And I'm not blaming the woman—for your sake, we'll admit she's all you say she is. I'm only pointing out the possibility of such a union, and I say again, is it worth it?"

Sir Pierce was biting on his cigar.

"No," he replied, slowly; "it's not worth it."

"Then you'll drop it—eh, old chap?"

Sir Pierce was silent for a moment.

"No," he said, after a pause; "I said we wouldn't drop it there."

"Then what on earth are you going to do?"

Sir Pierce walked down the room and then back again until he stood before Meldrum.

"You've ruined Mrs. Charterys' character," he said, slowly. Then he held up his hand. "No," he interrupted, "wait a bit. I'm not imputing anything that's not just what it ought to be. It was quite right that you should have said it, because I suppose it's true—there's no getting out of that—but what I want to point out is this, that Mrs. Charterys has never told anyone that he is dead; she has never uttered the lie, and, as I told you, she gives me not the slightest encouragement. Now, to clear Mrs. Charterys of willful deception, she must be asked the question."

"A ridiculously fine scruple," interposed Meldrum.

"Probably," agreed Sir Pierce, "but I feel what I'm saying is right. You see, I love her." He said it quite simply. "And so I want to know that she is not capable of such a thing as you would suggest."

"And who's to ask her?" inquired Meldrum.

"You! You're the only man who can. Everybody else thinks that he's dead—she knows that. You must ask her."

## II.

A fortnight out of time can make all the difference in the world; and the fortnight that followed Sir Pierce's game of billiards with Anthony Meldrum had

the effect of indicating a different point of view to the two men, with such gradual degree as can be attained in so short a time.

In his inner consideration of things, Meldrum was by no means sorry that the asking of the question had been delegated to him. He had a distinct admiration for the unsophisticated character of Sir Pierce, and the possibility of saving him from the scheming designs of a sex for whom experience had brought him but little inward respect seemed as useful a thing as he could wish to do. That Mrs. Charterys, whoever she was, would maintain her position, he felt confident. Such women, was his argument, do not hold to their ends; they cling to them, and the position held by Sir Pierce at Castle Trench, in Clogreen, was one that many women might envy. No—Mrs. Charterys would maintain her position. He felt sure of that, and a cynical anticipation of upsetting her calculations made him look forward to the putting of the question.

With Sir Pierce, at the outset of that eventful fortnight, a generous consideration for the good name of Mrs. Charterys was the only thought that had taken any hold on his mind. But the darkness of one night and the light of one morning are apt to throw a different aspect on even the most accepted subjects. As Meldrum had considered him, Sir Pierce was unsophisticated, a prey to generous impulse that for the time being had the power of concealing a pride that was narrow-minded from want of experience.

The morning after their conversation over the billiard table, the impulse of generous consideration found itself slowly being replaced by an inclination to think that Mrs. Charterys, even supposing that, when the question was put to her directly, she would tell the truth, had treated society—the society of Clogreen, of which he was the head—in a distinctly dishonorable way. For the past two years she had assumed a state, a state that gave any single man a full and sufficient reason to lose his heart to her, and probably checker his life with a desire which he could never fulfill.

He had no doubt himself, and it was the personal element in it that made the argument appeal to him, that he would not have thought of Mrs. Charterys with any affection had he known that her husband was alive. Without doubt there was reason in that argument, plain, cold reason, which no man in his senses could deny, and Sir Pierce began to fix his mind upon its acceptance.

At the breakfast table the next morning, he explained the situation of his mind to Meldrum.

"You can ask the question, if you like," he said, draining his cup of coffee; "in fact, I still expect that you will ask it in order to expose her, but I'm hanged if that excuses the fact that she has tacitly deceived the whole crowd of us these two years. I should never have let my sentiments get the better of me if I'd known."

Meldrum smiled. "My dear Pierce," said he, "your sentiments have never got the better of you for a moment. Don't you let yourself believe that they have."

Sir Pierce was inclined to be annoyed. It seemed to imply a certain shallowness in his character.

"What reason have you to say that?" he asked.

"The same reason," replied Meldrum, "that made you remark that Mrs. Charterys had tacitly deceived the whole crowd of you. You wouldn't have used those words, my dear fellow, if your sentiments had got the better of you."

"Well, I maintain that I'm right," insisted Sir Pierce.

"Exactly," Meldrum replied, quietly. "I haven't seen the lady, but, as you say, tacit deception ought to be strong enough to kill any sentiment under the sun; and as there aren't many of them it should be pretty successful."

"Still—I think the question should be asked," said Sir Pierce. "I have a bigoted notion of setting wrong to right, and I hate the idea of a woman masquerading under false colors in any place where I should have to meet and accept her statements as gospel."

"Decidedly," said Meldrum, "the question must be asked."

And so it was that the change originated in the mind of Sir Pierce Trench, but the alteration in the opinion of Anthony Meldrum did not begin until the next day, when he met and was introduced to Mrs. Charterys.

She was a tall, graceful woman of nearly thirty, with the dark hair and blue-gray eyes of her race. There was the expression in her face, Meldrum told himself, of a woman who knows what life is, and has with quiet determination chosen the most unsordid side of it; knows what life is, vaguely, with no insight into the vivid details, but yet with a sufficient consciousness of its pains and its pleasures, its grotesques and its squalors.

He could quite imagine her simple, but not implicitly so. Simplicity usually meant an imbecility of ignorance that is far worse than childish in a woman. He could imagine her with simple sentiments, simple impressions, almost subtle and without doubt original in their simplicity. In fact, for the first time in many years, Anthony Meldrum found himself interested in a woman. And that began the change in the position that he had adopted with regard to the whole affair.

At a glance he took in the trend of Sir Pierce's mind since their conversation about Mrs. Charterys' husband. It was plainly obvious that she was not a kindred spirit with him, and so the slightest difficulty that presented itself to his affection was sufficient to overthrow the whole structure; and if Meldrum had any sentiment in his composition at all, it was that there is the one woman in the world to the one man. He was practical enough to admit the preponderant difficulty of finding her.

No, she was scarcely the woman whose mind would fit in, niche for niche, with that of Sir Pierce, and it was probably just as well that things had turned out as they did. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that the Charterys he had met and heard of but two months ago in Ballarat was the lady's husband. He had remembered since that Charterys had told him he came from an obscure village in County

Tipperary. Clogreen, of course, was that very village. There was not a doubt about that; but after five minutes' conversation with Mrs. Charterys, he began to feel the irksome sense of a duty hanging in the back of his mind, and with an uncomfortable sensation he recollected the question; the question that he had brought upon himself to ask. It seemed a mean sort of business this cross-questioning of a woman before witnesses, when she did not know that she was on trial. It jarred on his nature. He preferred things in the open, if it were only for the sport of the thing. Shooting tame pigeons as they did on those islands on the Seine was what he considered caddish.

At the end of ten days his decision was the same, but the point of view had changed.

He was in love with Mrs. Charterys. A man who never expects to fall in love falls deeply, passionately and irresistibly.

How could he ask her?

Yet, if he did not ask her, how could he know whether the Charterys he had heard of was a different man?

How?

### III.

"My dear Meldrum," Sir Pierce was saying, as a fortnight after their game of billiards the two men were standing dressed for dinner before the fire in the drawing room at Castle Trench, awaiting the arrival of their guests—Miss Delia Butler and Mrs. Charterys. "My dear Meldrum, you imposed a duty on yourself a fortnight ago, and for the last ten days you've positively shirked it."

Meldrum critically surveyed the polish on his boots.

"Well, it's not quite a nice thing to have to do, is it?" he said, lamely.

Sir Pierce became argumentative. Every Irishman has a full proportion of the sense of his rights, even if he doesn't get them.

"It's not to be expected," he said, hotly, "that you can see the affair from my point of view. You don't come from a society that is old-fashioned enough to

have scruples. But here am I, the leader of what society there is in Clogreen, here am I, entertaining a woman to dinner who is passing among us all as an eligible widow, yet whose husband is alive and kicking, in another continent. It's all impossible, and it's got to be put an end to. You're the only man who can reasonably do it without a fuss; you promised to do it, and now you keep putting it off, putting it off, until—well, until it'll be too late. You'll soon be in the same position as we are, having to accept his being dead, whether we like it or not." Sir Pierce tried to press a crease out of his shirt front, created by the exertion of this heated argument.

Meldrum turned and looked thoughtfully into the fire.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "you must admit the case is changed."

"How?"

"I made that statement about her husband before I'd met Mrs. Charterys, merely to prove an abstract theory. Now—well, now, it's a different matter."

He spoke quite coolly, without the slightest tinge of enthusiasm in his voice, so that it would have taken a keener perception than Sir Pierce's to have fathomed what lay at the bottom of his objection.

"And now that you've met her," said Sir Pierce, unrelentingly, "you must see as I do, that she's a pretty woman who should by no means be allowed to pass in society as eligible for matrimony, when she's got a husband alive the other side of the world."

"I don't think she's pretty," said Meldrum, quietly.

"Well, I do!" ejaculated Sir Pierce. "That is—I did," he added. Meldrum smiled.

"Pretty women have no brains," he said. "Thank the Lord, they haven't. A pretty woman with brains, just like a boy with a little learning, is a dangerous thing."

"You're turning off the question," said Sir Pierce.

"Well, I don't like to ask her," said Meldrum, "and that's the truth of it."

"Why?"



"Because I know she'll tell the truth."

"Then she'll condemn herself," said Sir Pierce, "and that'll be about best for everybody. At any rate," he added, in the heat of impulse, "if you don't ask her, I shall; then there'll be a scene, because she'll understand I haven't believed her from the first."

"You'd ask a woman to dinner," said Meldrum, contemptuously, "and then put her to that indignity."

"And what indignity has she put us all to? No! You know I wouldn't do that; but look here——"

"I'll do it," said Meldrum. "It'll satisfy me, too. Satisfy my theory," he added.

And so, when he found himself opposite to Mrs. Charterys at the dinner table, his conversation was not at its best. He was trying to force an opportunity. It was better that he should know; better that he should hear it from her own lips, and then—go. He knew she would tell the truth.

What a merciless shame it was, he thought, as he looked across the table at her, that a woman like that, a woman of flesh and blood, with all the sensible simplicity of another and a finer age, should be shackled to some God forsaken wretch who was not even fit for the colonies!

After a time the conversation turned on fishing.

"My biggest catch," Mrs. Charterys was saying—her voice was a very tuneful one, pitched on a rather low key and intensely soothing to the ear—"my biggest catch weighed something over two ounces."

"So you put it back into the water again; eh, Kathleen?" said Miss Butler.

"Yes, but how did you know?"

"I ought to know you by this time," replied the little old maid, with a smile.

"I caught a three-pounder once—only once."

"Where was that, Meldrum?" asked Sir Pierce.

"In Australia. By the way, weren't you in that part of the world with your husband, Mrs. Charterys?"

The question brought the slightest tinge of color to her cheeks, and Sir

Pierce leaned a little more forward over his plate.

"Yes, three years ago we were in Australia," she replied.

"Oh!" Meldrum raised his eyebrows. "What's your husband doing out there now?"

There was a short silence. One of those little pauses in conversation that may mean nothing, yet may contain the most vital speech in the lives of many. Sir Pierce's hand stopped as he raised it to his mouth. Miss Butler laid her knife and fork slowly on her plate, and Mrs. Charterys broke her bread nervously.

"My husband is dead," she said.

#### IV.

Of the two men, there need be no hesitation in saying that Meldrum was the more surprised, but he kept his surprise in check. Sir Pierce, on the other hand—no sooner had the carriage called for Mrs. Charterys and taken the two ladies away—turned on his friend with an exclamation of incredulity.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he said. "I would have scarcely believed when you told me first that Mrs. Charterys was the sort of woman to silently deceive a whole community of people, but that she would tell that lie, openly, in the face of others——"

"The truth is a confoundedly hard thing to say sometimes, Trench," Meldrum interrupted, quietly, "and sometimes there's deucedly little honor attached to the telling of it."

"Platitudes like that don't change my opinion for a moment," Sir Pierce retaliated. "To tell a downright lie, like that, shows the woman is worthless to the core."

"You may be thankful that your sentiments never got the better of you," said Meldrum, ironically.

"I am!" exclaimed Sir Pierce. "Confoundedly glad!"

For the first time over the whole matter, Meldrum was slowly losing his temper. It was bad enough in all conscience to have been the one to bring such accusations upon a woman. He

despised himself utterly. But it was considerably worse to hear her abused; the woman whom, of all others he had ever met, he held highest in his opinion; and to know that he, in the first instance, for some petty theory, had been the cause of it himself. It was enough to make any man lose his temper.

Was there any other woman—or man, for that matter—who would not have stuck to her or his guns under the circumstances? When a woman has a worthless brute of a husband some thousands of miles away, with no likelihood of his ever returning, isn't it forgivable if she says he's dead, instead of having to admit to those who know her best, that her life was a failure, and that she is separated from her husband?

"Look here, Trench," he said, after a moment's silence. "It's very easy to chuck mud; there's plenty of it in every street, if one'll only stoop to pick it up."

"And as I've said before," his host replied, none the less affirmatively, "platitudes won't wash characters. She's a rank outsider with a simple face. A rank outsider!"

The repetition of that epithet seemed to sting Meldrum into action. He dug his hands deeply into his pockets and strode down the room.

"Trench," he said, quickly and nervously, "you're making an ass of yourself. If your moral principles were a little broader, you'd have found yourself making allowances for this business, so that in the end you wouldn't have looked such a—such a fool."

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"Mean?" Meldrum turned excitedly on his heel, and looked into Sir Pierce's face. "I mean that this has been a trumped-up business from the very beginning. I trumped it up in the first instance as a joke, to give a little jerk to your calculations. I didn't know you imagined yourself in love with the lady."

Sir Pierce's eyes were opening wider with every word.

"You mean to say it was all a lie?" he gasped.

"Every stick of it," said Meldrum. "And I couldn't get out of it, once it was said. I hoped you'd forget about it. I

tried to put it off, and give you the chance. You wouldn't take it. Then when she said he was dead, as of course I knew she would, I thought your love would make you believe her, sooner than me. It didn't. You weren't even worth that much to her. So now—well, now I've had to tell you the truth."

"My God!" exclaimed Sir Pierce, "it was lucky for you you told me this here—in my own house."

"Yes, I'd considered that," said Meldrum, "and, with your permission, I'll have my trunks moved down to the hotel in the village."

"Yes, at once," said Sir Pierce.

## V.

The next morning the maid-of-all-work who served at the hotel table presented Meldrum with an unstamped letter. He broke it open. News flies fast here, he thought. The letter read:

DEAR MR. MELDRUM: Can you spare me a few moments this morning? I shall be here at Anesk, at twelve o'clock.

KATHLEEN CHARTERYS.

He folded the letter up slowly and put it into his letter case, and then went on with his breakfast. The train he had determined to take, which brought him a connection with the night mail up to Dublin, did not start till the evening; had it started then, he would have waited until he had seen Mrs. Charterys. Accordingly he packed his things as soon as he had finished breakfast, went for a stroll through the village, and then, as it neared twelve o'clock, turned his direction toward Anesk, one of those spacious country houses in Ireland that hide themselves in the midst of a most beautiful garden.

Mrs. Charterys was on the seat in the garden, on the lawn at the back of the house, he was told; and thither the maid conducted him.

She rose as he came toward her, and held out her hand. He could not guess what was in her mind, but it appeared that she knew him better—ever since last night. It seemed a ridiculous thing

to him, that his heart should beat faster at the sight of her, but he was compelled to admit to himself that it did.

"I have this morning received a letter from Sir Pierce Trench," she said, quickly, as soon as the maid had retired. "Would you care to sit here in the garden?" she added. "Or shall we go into the house?"

"I'd sooner stay here," said Meldrum.

They sat down together on the seat.

"Well, then," she continued, "in this letter Sir Pierce explains everything—from his point of view."

"Needn't that be sufficient?" said Meldrum.

"Oh, no, Mr. Meldrum," she replied. "To this case there are distinctly two points of view—distinctly two."

"But why should we discuss the other?" he asked.

"Because I fancy that, though you think you are aware of all its particulars, you are really quite ignorant. May I tell you the whole story?"

"Take all your time over it," said Meldrum.

"Well, I will be brief—as brief as I can. Four years ago—I feel all this explanation is due to you, Mr. Meldrum, due a thousand times over—four years ago, I went out with my husband to Australia. We did not get on well together, and in a year and a half we had separated. I myself had hated the idea of leaving here, leaving Anesk, but after our separation I did not care to return. Oh, quite a woman's reason; because I did not want all the people I knew to see that my life had been a failure."

"So far I have argued all this out for myself," said Meldrum, quietly.

"Well, Miss Butler, the lady you met last night, wrote frequently to me, trying to persuade me to return. I always gave the same excuse. Then one day brought me a letter from her in which she told me that some rumor had got into the village, and was believed by everyone, that my husband was dead—that no one, if I returned, would ever mention his name to me again, knowing how badly we had hit it off; so she argued the deception, such as it was,

would not be mine, for I should never be put to the question. It was an accepted fact. I was prevailed upon, and I returned."

"Still, Mrs. Charterys," Meldrum broke in—"still, this is almost word for word what I thought to myself."

"Yes," she said, simply; "I don't know why you are so sympathetic, Mr. Meldrum."

Meldrum's hand tightened a little on his arm.

"But this is not all," she continued. "When I reached home I learned that Miss Butler herself had started the rumor; and I was weak—too weak to contradict it. I kept as much as possible to myself and avoided everyone. About a month before I met you I had a letter from Australia. My husband had died in Ballarat—I suppose some few days after you had heard about his existence."

"Ah!" said Meldrum, with a deep sigh. "So Sir Pierce has told you everything?"

"Absolutely everything," she replied, "and there is one question I want to ask you."

"Anything you like," he said, slowly. The opening of life, the beginning of possibility, was gradually dawning on his mind. This woman could be his. His, if she would have him. The only woman in the world. The one woman to the one man.

"Then why," she asked, "believing what I said to be an untruth—because, of course, circumstantial evidence was all in your favor—why did you suddenly take the blame upon your own shoulders; blame that has succeeded in making you seem despicable in the eyes of your friend? I had heard of chivalry. This seems to me the first time I have ever experienced it. Why did you do it?"

"Do you want an honest answer, Mrs. Charterys?" he asked, quietly.

"Yes," she said; "I think, for all my weakness, I deserve an honest answer."

"Then," he said, slowly, looking into her eyes, "it was because, right or wrong, I must protect the woman that I love."



## AS I GO SPEEDING

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

**A**S I go speeding to the Western Gate,  
Let me not murmur at unwelcome fate,  
But rather life's unnumbered joys relate—  
As I go speeding west.

Beyond the sunset lies effulgent dawn.  
I would not make men sad while journeying on,  
Nor give them food for tears, when I am gone.  
I would not make men sad.

Too much we talk of gloom, and grief, and shade,  
Forgetting that kind law a just God made,  
Whereby small woes with mighty joys are paid.  
Too much we talk of gloom.

Yea, there are vast delights on this good earth,  
And he who counts them, from his hour of birth,  
Shall find this life a thing of precious worth.  
Yea, there are vast delights.

As I go speeding west, I look for light.  
A million stars shine through one single night,  
And all the sunset promises are bright—  
As I go speeding west.

# DIVIDED

BY VINCENT HARPER



THE situation developed with such rapidity that what was discussed at dinner on Saturday night at pretty well every great house in Queen Anne County as a bit of uncommonly delicious gossip, grew into a rather ugly piece of well-founded belief on the links and at afternoon tea on Sunday, and by Monday morning had blossomed out into an only too palpable fact. There was trouble—very serious trouble—at Dudley Court. Mr. and Mrs. Dudley-West had separated, or were about to separate, or, anyhow, they were hopelessly divided—on the question of Miss Gladys Kerr! And quite the most exciting thrill ran through the Norbury Hunt.

Not that Mr. Dudley-West was an appreciable quantity in the calculations of the hunting set, since that strenuous man of business rarely visited his country seat except on Sunday, and never rode to hounds; but the very appreciable value of Mrs. Dudley-West implied the existence, at least, of a Mr. Dudley-West, and it was felt that any untoward eruption of the heretofore admirably docile silent partner, or other disturbance of the Dudley Court *entente*, was as deplorable as it certainly was unexpected. But there could be no doubt about it; there was trouble at Dudley Court.

Mr. March's man had heard from Mr. Dudley-West's man, who had heard from the butler, that there had been a scene at dinner, when a decanter of sherry had been upset. Mrs. Dudley-West had cried and said things, and Mr. Dudley-West had "gone on regularly 'arrowin', h'awful!" Mr. Dudley-West had taken the late train for town on Sunday night, driving twelve miles to the main line; and Mrs. Dudley-West had taken the early train for town on Monday morning, driving her maid and all the other servants nearly into hysterics with her counter orders and her state of nerves.

Now, Fordyce March, of "The Pad-dock," Esq., and M. F. H. of the Norbury Fox Hounds, was not the man to take a narrow view of his responsibilities. Another less punctilious and conscientious master of fox hounds might very well have felt that the question of the marital infelicities of the county gentry lay without his province, but not so was it with Fordy March. The Norbury Hunt—and the Norbury Hunt was the county—the Norbury Hunt was very largely the creature of his own hands. It was owing to his missionary zeal that only hunting people had come and built these lordly mansions on the hilltops. Out of the hunting season he would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and he was instant in season and out of season in preaching the gospel of hunting. And of his many

This is the fifth in the series of hunting stories now appearing in AINSLEE'S. Those already published are "The First Meet," "By Eminent Domain," "From Saturday to Monday," and "The Phantom Ha-Ha," in the October, November, December and January numbers respectively.—THE EDITORS.

converts none was to him such a crown of rejoicing as Mrs. Dudley-West. It is true she was encumbered with the mortgage of Mr. Dudley-West, who was a Wall Street man past hope of salvation, but he had kept away from his wife so considerably and allowed her to maintain the second best string of horses in the county with so much silence that to all intents and purposes he was as good as if he did not exist—perhaps, too, Mr. Dudley-West's application to business, which was awfully bad form, facilitated Mrs. Dudley-West's application to hunting, which was awfully good form. From every point of view, then, anything like a break at Dudley Court was a thing to be deplored, and, if an M. F. H. could prevent it, it would be prevented. And of course the surest way to arrive at a true diagnosis and to formulate a successful plan of campaign was to consult Mrs. Craigie.

Having arranged a meeting with that astute manipulator of wires and with the major, March drove over to "Pen-Craigie," where they three went at once into executive session behind closed doors, with Mr. Craigie accorded the privileges of the floor—without a vote, however.

"Oho!" chuckled Mr. Craigie, jabbing his finger into the major's waistcoat and winking at March, "that's the little game, is it? Well, sir, I always said that Dudley-West could bear watching—yes, I did, my dear—and now you see I was right. Well, sir, you must give the foxy old Lothario credit for good taste, at all events. Devilish fine woman, sir, that Miss Kerr! If I were thirty years younger—and single, of course—why, then, damme, I'd—"

"Randolph!" said Mrs. Craigie. "Don't be an old fool. But, my dear Fordy, this is sheer nonsense! Take my word for it, that *frappé* expert accountant would never be guilty of a flirtation—such little escapades take time from business and may prove expensive. No! If Gladys Kerr had anything to do with this absurd tiff, I'll wager it was all on account of those things she wore—d-i-s-gusting!"

"W-h-e-w!" whistled March, the light of a great revelation dawning upon him.

"Deucedly smart and fit and becoming," snarled Mr. Craigie from the hearth rug to which he had retreated at Mrs. Craigie's nod.

"Don't mind him, please," said Mrs. Craigie, compassionately, "for I never do. Yes, Fordy, my dear, the moment I saw that brazen woman in those shocking things I knew that Mrs. Dudley-West would threaten to wear them—and that, of course, would mean war, because Mr. Dudley-West is nothing if not conservative. You know how he everlastingly keeps harping on 'old New Yorkers' and 'these vulgar *nouveau riche* displays' and 'the quietly genteel' and all the rest of it. Yes, sir, you'll find that she said she would, and he said she shouldn't, and she said she would—and—well, you know."

"Oh, we know, don't we?" grunted Mr. Craigie, winking wickedly at the major.

"Randolph!" said Mrs. Craigie, impressively.

"What do you make of it, major?" asked March, turning to the major, who had sat silently listening with a philosophic smile on his placid countenance.

"That a house divided against itself cannot stand—and that a skirt divided against itself cannot stand the searching criticism likely to be bestowed upon it by poor old Dudley-West," answered the major, softly.

All laughed, and Mr. Craigie repeated his opinion as to the smartness, fitness and becomingness of the garment at issue.

"But, good Lord! you don't mean to tell me you think that after setting up such a stable for her and seemingly growing more and more proud of her riding he would let such a question as the cut of her riding habit be—be—well, be the cause of a row, you know!" exclaimed March.

"I wish that insufferable young woman had kept away from here," remarked Mrs. Craigie. "Apart from her indecent costume, she proved a nuisance, for—"



"They're all jealous of her," murmured Mr. Craigie to the major.

"For her talk was worse even than that Miss Warburton's—positively reeking of the stable! And now half the girls are mad to try those unthinkable pantaloons. Literally mad!" went on Mrs. Craigie, ignoring the negligible member.

"But why do you call the divided skirt indecent," asked March, rather warmly, "since Mrs. Archy Merson and several other very smart Meadowbrook women have gone in for them?"

"There you go! Just as I predicted. In a week the whole hunt will be divided on the skirt question," laughed the major.

"No, but really, you know," argued March, "the divided skirt——"

"Is hideous, scandalous—positively immoral," broke in Mrs. Craigie.

"But devilishly smart—yes, and I'm for it," cackled Mr. Craigie; "for it, sir, damme!"

"You say that because you know very well that I would never make a guy of myself by wearing one. But what do all the men with girls—yes, or with wives—think of it? I'll wager not one of them will permit it," retorted Mrs. Craigie.

March wandered over to the window and looked out gloomily.

"And you are quite right," remarked the major. "In the final alignment you will find that all the bachelors——"

"And I," corrected Mr. Craigie.

"All the bachelors and Mr. Craigie are for it, and all the married men are against it," went on the major.

"And how about the women?" asked March, turning from the window, and with a touch of scorn in his tone.

"Ah, there you have me!" laughed the major.

"But not me," snapped Mrs. Craigie. "Of the women, I tell you, none but the——"

"Mrs. Dudley-West, ma'am," announced the butler, and Mrs. Craigie stopped short.

The next moment Mrs. Dudley-West sailed in—her relations with Mrs. Craigie made formalities unnecessary—and

with a quick sweep of her big, blue, wise eye around the circle of guilty faces she burst into a laugh.

"Speak of the angels," said the major, a great believer in the ultimate diplomatic value of a quite undiplomatic frankness at all ticklish crises.

"Oh, oh, oh—you villains!" rattled Mrs. Dudley-West, shaking her crop at one after another of them. "So you will talk about me behind my back, will you? Thanks, I prefer to pronounce sentence standing."

Her last words were addressed to Mr. Craigie, who had been dancing about behind her with a chair in his hands in a vain effort to locate the site of her intended repose.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Craigie, "to be perfectly frank, we were discussing you—or rather, that Kerr girl's peculiar——"

"Skirt? Well, it may save you all considerable time and the necessity to debate the question, if I tell you that I ran up to town Monday morning, and—I shall wear mine at the ladies' steeplechase on Thursday!" announced Mrs. Dudley-West, enjoying immensely the effect of her startling words.

"And quite right, too! There, now, Honoria, my love, you see that art, science and—and—and Mrs. Dudley-West have triumphed over——"

"It had to come," explained March, addressing nobody in particular.

"There seems to be some difference of opinion as to the—well, the æsthetic value of the garment, you know. You have the interests of the hunt at heart. Might it not be well to go a bit slow in this rather drastic reform? United we stand, divided we fall, you know," suggested the major.

"Oh, I know that Miss Mott and a lot of others will damn me," admitted Mrs. Dudley-West, nonchalantly.

"A lot of old tabbies!" commented Mr. Craigie.

"Randolph!"

"The major is right, and I do wish you would go slow, for we are nearing the end of the season and everything has gone along without a hitch. By next season, I have no doubt, every woman

in the county will go in for them," pleaded March, seriously.

"Never!" dogmatized Mrs. Craigie.

"Oh, it's too late now," went on Mrs. Dudley-West, finally dropping into a chair, "for, you see, it would never do for me to disappoint D.-W., you know."

March started with joy and sent a significant look at the major. Confound servants, anyway! Here the whole county had been thrown into a state of nerves over a supposed conjugal rupture, when all the time D.-W. had urged Mrs. D.-W. to—divide!

"What's that?" asked Mrs. Craigie, less credulous than March. "I thought that Delano was a sensible man and would forbid you to make a scandalous exhibition of your—of yourself, you know."

"Why, of course," replied Mrs. Dudley-West, sweetly. "Poor dear D.-W. feels exactly as you expected he would, my dear; but I gave him my positive assurance that I would wear the beauties on Thursday, and of course it would never do to disappoint him!"

"Dead game! A thoroughbred, sir, a stayer, sir, damme!" remarked Mr. Craigie, in an aside to the major.

"Oh, you silly child," said Mrs. Craigie. "But that's just the way with the young women of to-day. They never know the value of a good husband."

"It's the old girls who know a good thing when they see it—eh, my love?" chirped Mr. Craigie, putting his little arm partially around his wife's waist.

"Seriously, my dear," went on Mrs. Craigie, "don't you think that Delano is too good and kind and—indulgent, shall I say?—for you to vex him in this way?"

"He's outside, holding my horse, now. Better ask him," replied Mrs. Dudley-West, laughing, and all showed surprise, while the M. F. H. betrayed genuine delight.

Mr. Craigie flitted out of the room, but when he returned his face indicated that his interview with the good and kind and indulgent Delano had not been very satisfactory.

"Says he won't come in, won't give in, and won't go in for 'em," reported Mr.

Craigie, lugubriously, and March's spirits oozed.

"You don't know him. But really, it is a shame to keep the dear boy waiting out there—the first time that he ever rode with me, too! Good-by, all. Run over and have a look at them, Mrs. Craigie, to-morrow. The rest of you will have to wait until Thursday. Till then"—she waved a kiss with the end of her crop, and ran out of the room, with Mr. Craigie trotting after her.

After his return to the council, the major made a serious address, outlining what he felt was the situation and the best way to meet it, and the M. F. H. subsided to a low level of despondency, for the major—always a rock of strength amid the eddies of Norbury gossip and hurt feelings—evidently took a serious view of the wretched matter. It was finally agreed that Mrs. Craigie should labor with Mrs. Dudley-West, while March interviewed Mr. Dudley-West, and the major acted as a committee on the general peace. Mr. Craigie appointed himself a delegate at large, with instructions to vote for the "divided" under the unit rule. And the council adjourned *sine die*.

The major proved to have been wrong in his prognostication. He had predicted that in a week the Norbury Hunt would be split into two grand divisions: those who did and those who did not go in for the divided. But, as a matter of fact, in twenty-four hours there was not a house in the county in which there were not dividers and anti-dividers, while even the country folk on the farms took a hand in rendering or defending the inviolability of the garment. On Wednesday it was reported that a parcel had arrived by express from the orthodox habitmaker in town, for Dudley Court, so that it was confidently expected that the ladies' steeplechase—always an event of intense interest—would this season prove to be an occasion of epoch-making importance. Among other things, it was felt that Thursday would establish the heretofore open question as to just who was the master of Dudley Court, for Mr. Dudley-West made no secret of his ob-

jection to the innovation, and Mrs. Dudley-West was equally explicit as to her intention to innovate.

Meanwhile the M. F. H. was in the gall of bitterness, himself feeling and being forcibly reminded by all the men at the club that for him to approach an elderly and chilly gentleman on the subject of his wife's dress called for an amount of gall, bitter or otherwise, of infinite galliness. However, with the master of the Norbury Hounds, to know his duty was to make an attempt to perform it. So, after plotting with Mrs. Craigie to get Mrs. Dudley-West away from home, he dropped in to see Mr. Dudley-West—about signing a petition for a new macadamized road through the Dingle bottom.

Mr. Dudley-West was at home. Likewise he was in a mood to listen to Mr. March's quite unnecessarily labored argument on behalf of the proposed new road. He at once signed the petition—and there ensued a painful silence and an equally painful absence of a question before the meeting. March was unhappy. A number of lubricating topics suggested themselves, and he tried one or two of them, but each time Mr. Dudley-West was disconcertingly acquiescent and heard the M. F. H. out with no comment, save a murmured "Quite so," or "Certainly—of course." And again the silence, again the no question before the meeting—and withal an evidence of Mr. Dudley-West's entire willingness to entertain a motion to adjourn. It was hopeless. Not even on behalf of the Norbury Hunt could a chap suddenly catechize this calm and frigid banker as to his intentions respecting his wife's attire. Accordingly, after another deathly silence, March rose, and his host interposed no objection to his immediate departure. When March reported his ignominious failure to Mrs. Craigie, she also reported no progress in the matter of inducing sweetness and light into the mind of Mrs. Dudley-West. And to-morrow would be Thursday!

Never before had a steeplechase attracted the throngs which now lined the sides of the course. Of course all the

county was on hand, the farm wagons of the farmers and the delivery wagons of the storekeepers locking spokes with the smart carts and drags of the gentry. Moreover, from a number of other hunts had come unusually large delegations. All of the eight entries, except Mrs. Dudley-West, arrived early, and as none of the seven equestriennes had dared to do what all of them had just ached to do, the "antis" seemed to have won the day, and the hopes of the multitude centered upon the late arrival from Dudley Court. Scouts made anxious reconnaissances along the road, and when at last Mrs. Dudley-West appeared, mounted on "Fifi," she was surrounded by an escort of bicyclists and pedestrians whose faces announced to the awaiting crowds that the "antis" had it unanimously, for Mrs. Dudley-West sat soberly and reverently sidewise on a perfectly orthodox saddle! A few of the knowing ones, however, at once detected that, while the saddle was that of a woman, the skirt was that of an advanced woman!

"A compromise," whispered the major to Mrs. Craigie, as the observed of all observers passed the victoria.

"She's a genius!" replied Mrs. Craigie. "She said she would wear them—and she has; but no divorce need follow. But how glum she looks—which is not discreet, you know."

"I feel, somehow, that there has been a rather fine bit of comedy up at Dudley Court—very fine, very noble," said the major.

And there had been a bit of comedy at Dudley Court—a fine bit and a noble, quite as the deep-seeing major had surmised.

The butler reported, to the chagrin of the expectant servants' hall, that luncheon on the fateful day had been partaken of by Mr. and Mrs. Dudley-West with as much ceremony and tender attention to the wants of one another as though company were by. One more gifted than the butler, with powers of analysis and deduction, might very well have feared that the studied calm and the ceremonial courtesy on the part of the high contending parties did

but portend the storm. After luncheon Mr. Dudley-West sent a formal invitation to Mrs. Dudley-West to come to his little den adjoining the billiard room. She accepted, and went to the rendezvous ready dressed in the bifurcated source of the present strained relations.

"Well," said Mr. Dudley-West, in the voice that she had heard him use only once before in their dozen years of married life, "I see that any discussion would now be a waste of time. All I wish to say, therefore, is that you make this indecent exhibition of yourself at your peril—yes," he went on, stung into rage by the beautiful woman's superb scorn—and by his love for her!—"yes, and you needn't curl your lip in that way, for I tell you, madam, that I have thought over this last insanity of yours, and if my entreaties, my arguments, my commands——"

"Commands?" flung Mrs. Dudley-West back at him, with a savage whack with her crop on the balloon-shaped subject of debate.

"And," went on the banker, his face white with passion and sorrow and nameless bitterness, "while I am not prepared to state just what steps I may take if you deliberately and publicly humiliate me and disgrace yourself, I tell you frankly I shall at once take such action as will make any repetition of this impossible. Oh, my God! girl, don't you see what this——" and the banker could say no more.

"Now, don't for mercy's sake, act as though the cut of my skirt was the climax of a melodrama! You hate horses—yes, you *do*!—and—don't interrupt me, please—and you just positively despise everything smart. You have read some jokes in the papers, and heard some older mummies than yourself damning the divided skirt—the only sensible and comfortable way to ride!—and so you have worked yourself up into this ridiculous fit of madness. Well, sir, I've announced that I would do what no end of women—of older New York families than yours, Mr. Dudley-West!—what they have done; and, as you perceive, I am going to do it!"

Once more she swished the skirt with her crop defiantly, and then went coolly out of the room. It was Mr. Dudley-West who slammed the door, not she. At the steps of the side entrance she found the eager "Fifi," seeming by her unusually high spirits to comprehend why they had put the tiny English hunting saddle on her, instead of the customary side saddle. And great appeared to be the joy of "Fifi" when they dropped the stirrups, one on either side, and she heard her mistress' voice and felt her mount easily and gracefully—astride!

From one of the upper windows of the house a man's white face looked unseen down at her as she trotted gayly off down the avenue, and the look on the face was such as comes not twice to the same man's face, since it comes only when the light of one's life goes finally out.

The avenue at Dudley Court is not a very long one, but before the gates were reached a great something had come into the heart of the defiant and gloriously lovely woman who rode forth having triumphed over her lord. Sending the groom on alone, Mrs. Dudley-West wheeled about and trotted smartly back to the stables. The stables were deserted, every man and boy having waited only the lady's departure, to make off by shortest routes to the scene of their master's public undoing at the hands of their mistress.

Finding, therefore, nobody about, Mrs. Dudley-West hurried to the saddle room and took her own side saddle off its rack, and hastened back to the courtyard, where she had left "Fifi" wondering, but submissive. Now, Mrs. Dudley-West could write a book on saddles, but for some time it looked as though she could not unsaddle "Fifi"—why *do* they insist on the very last hole in the straps, anyhow? The removal of her gauntlets seemed to facilitate matters, for presently one buckle and then another yielded, and then the saddle was off. But now to put on this heavy, unbalanced, slidy, unscientific side saddle! With considerable effort, she managed to lift the saddle and place it on "Fifi's"

back, and then began the ticklish work of catching the dangling ends of the girth beneath the restless and suspicious "Fifi." Finally, however, the girth was duly buckled—not too tight, you know, but plenty tight enough, for really, there's no reason for making a torture of one's girth, you know.

And the white-faced man sat sullen and cold up at the window—until he suddenly saw his wife emerge from the stable yard, and this time, if not clothed, at all events in her right mind, for she rode a queen in a queenly way, and the divided skirt was reconciled! He guessed—poor, hungry old lover!—that she had remembered before it was too late, and that her pride had been routed by her love for him! And he guessed about right. Losing no time, Mr. Dudley-West dashed out to the stables and called aloud for some one to put the sorrel to the runabout. Nobody heard. So once more the Dudley Court stables became the scene of a first lesson in the principles and practice of harnessing; and in about three-quarters of an hour Mr. Dudley-West started forth—afoot!

Having to walk to the steeplechase course, he reached that exciting spot too late to see the start, but as he trudged nearer and nearer he could hear the shouts and hurrahs of the spectators.

He spied the major and March mounted and eagerly watching the distant field through their glasses, and just as he was about to call to them he heard March utter a cry of alarm, while the major whispered something quick and stern to him, at which March tore off down the field on "Mephisto," at that speedy giant's magnificent maddest. In an instant a wave of apprehension surged along the lines of spectators. Something must have happened in the field. The banker's heart seemed to stop beating for a moment. He was close to the tall figure of the major now, who sat like a statue of anxiety, gazing fixedly at March and "Mephisto."

"Major," said Mr. Dudley-West, hoarsely, "has something happened in the field? I can see nothing from here."

"Good God! Dudley-West, I did not

know you were here. No, don't try to squeeze in back of those horses—never stand back of a strange horse. Now, don't be unnecessarily alarmed. Mrs. Dudley-West's saddle turned under her when she flew the stone fence below the hill—I think—*think*, mind you—I saw her swing herself over astride of the horse—and March must have reached her in half a minute—to cut the saddle away, you know, or to—ah, there they all come over the crest of the hill!"

"Can you make out if——" came the voice of a great love from back of the major.

"Yes! Yes!" shouted the major, standing in his stirrups. "Mrs. Dudley-West has regained the lead—and the saddle is gone! March should have been a cowboy! Think of cutting away that damned swinging, pounding torment from under the belly of such an electric battery as 'Fifi'—and then to remount Mrs. Dudley-West, and—— She wins! She wins!" he fairly yelled, as he stooped and shook the hand of Mr. Dudley-West, who was wiping away tears of excitement and hope and—the joy that was dead and had come to life.

Mrs. Dudley-West won by a length over Mrs. Dick Van Vorst, and it required no argument to show that but for that blessed divided skirt she must have fallen backward to the ground when "Fifi" shied so viciously away from an ill-managed neighbor, and the saddle had slipped and hung a maddening thing under terrified "Fifi."

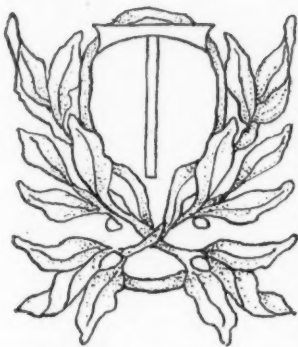
"Well, anyhow, I finished 'divided,' if I didn't begin so," laughed Mrs. Dudley-West as she kissed her husband good-night.

"The other way about, the other way about, my dear," replied Mr. Dudley-West. "We were divided before, not after, the race."

And the sentiments expressed at Dudley Court were echoed at every house in the Norbury country, even Miss Mott graciously accepting the major's judicious explanation, that "as an æsthetic object, the new skirt can not, of course, be advocated, but something may be said for it on the grounds of safety and convenience."

# THE HOUSE PARTY ON OLYMPUS

BY EDGAR ELLERTON



H E Y had wagered gloves—and that, too, after the major had declared it unbecoming a gentleman to bet on a “dead sure” thing. That he considered Miss de Veny’s victory a dead sure thing, he had also announced. But Mrs. Dot Gregor was not a woman to put two and two together—though the same may not be averred in regard to one and one, for she was an inveterate matchmaker—and she saw nothing inconsistent when Major Corliss laid his bet on the beautiful young French girl. It was the perversity of her sex, rather than any surety of winning, that influenced her to back Miss Lansing.

“No man in his senses would fall in love with a French poster,” she contended, stoutly.

“No man in his senses ever falls in love,” was the major’s counter attack.

“That accounts for the women you marry!”

“The women I marry! My dear Mrs. Gregor—”

“You—the sex, I mean. Bachelors

do not enter into this discussion. I never knew a man to marry the right woman.”

“Including the late Mr. Gregor?”

Mrs. Gregor wrinkled one of her chins—she had three. “Him more than most. He adored an eighteen-inch waist; every pound I gained robbed him of a year of life, poor man. Young Deering has no ideal as yet—I wish to give him a sensible one. It is my duty.”

“Your purpose,” he corrected.

“If Cameron Lansing were ugly as well as sensible, I should despair; but she is a splendid, magnificent——”

“And her waist measure?”

“A healthy twenty-four inches, thank heaven!” she replied, devoutly.

“And Miss de Veny is a slender, sylph-like——”

“Slender fiddlesticks! French corsets!” declared Miss Lansing’s champion with a scornful snort.

“But she has money.”

“Pooh! A steady diet, even of money, will pall. That’s why Phil invited a few of us poverty-stricken mortals up here—there are a dozen women in the swell set who would give a deal to be in my shoes-as chaperon of this house party. But Phil told me that he wanted a few genuine friends who value him for what he is, and not for what his men dig out of there”—with a downward sweep of her thumb, that might have indicated the whole of the nether regions, or merely that part covered by the claims of the Olympus Mining Company. “Miss



Lansing and you and I come under that head; Miss de Veny was asked because she used to go to school with his sister. No, she can't bait him with money."

"That's indelicate, applied to mademoiselle," remonstrated the major; "she'll have to be baited."

A shrug of Mrs. Gregor's massive shoulders betokened extreme skepticism.

"She will appear to, I grant you," she said, "but these French-born women have ways! And she has learned things in America, too——"

"Then American women have ways?"

All of Mrs. Gregor's chins shook impatiently. "Here they come," she said, briefly, but with distinct relief.

"Now that bet is off unless you observe neutrality and let the belligerent parties fight it out," warned the major as the others came up.

Mrs. Gregor had all a woman's passion for winning at any game she went into, and this stipulation did not please her—anything neutral, from tints to opinions, she cordially loathed. However, rather priding herself upon her disinterested motives, she yielded a reluctant consent.

The warring powers came up the steep path with every evidence of amicable relations. Both were flushed with the exertion, Miss de Veny delicately, like a cream rose petal touched with pink; Cameron Lansing splendidly, glowing from chin to blue-veined temples. Miss de Veny leaned with a pretty, drooping weariness upon an "Alpine" stock, fashioned crudely from a mountain ash; her slight figure swayed with every panting breath. Miss Lansing climbed without aid, one hand resting lightly on the hip where swung her fieldglass, the other easily balancing a slender fishing rod; her step free, decided, her magnificent physique pulsing with health and vitality.

Mrs. Gregor from the porch watched the approach with interested eyes, and her glance traveled instantly to Philip Deering, to see the effect of the picture upon him. All lost, apparently, for that spoiled scion of a moneyed race was occupied solely in getting his string of trout safely to the house.

"Seventeen beauties!" he shouted, swinging his trophies proudly.

"And I caught three of them," came in Miss Lansing's triumphant soprano.

"And you, Miss de Veny?" asked Major Corliss, observing mademoiselle's silence.

"Oh, I didn't fish," returned Miss de Veny, in her sweet, husky tones, sinking with a tired little sigh on the low porch step. "The flowers were so beautiful, I just roamed about like a child, and forgot you poor, hungry souls at home." She gracefully threw aside her light shade hat, showing the masses of her soft, dark hair, crowned with a wreath of mountain columbines.

"Wood nymph," said the major *sotto voce* to Mrs. Dot.

"French poster!" retorted she, only half lowering her voice. "Look at those heels!"

Miss de Veny had been "roaming" the mountain side in thin French boots; her position permitted a glimpse of an exquisite foot and ankle, and one inch of elaborate lace stocking. Philip Deering, coming up at that moment, forgot to admire in his amazement.

"You didn't climb in those things?" he exclaimed, aghast.

Coloring in shy surprise, and covering the beautiful foot demurely, Miss de Veny returned, sweetly: "Why, I haven't anything else."

Half ashamed of his masculine abruptness, Deering said apologetically: "Of course you're not used to roughing it the way we Westerners do. But we must get you something else, or you'll break your neck around here. Can't you lend Miss de Veny a pair, Miss Lansing?"

Cameron Lansing laughed gayly as she displayed a stout, thick-soled golf boot. "Seven leaguers!" she declared. "The princess could keep house in them."

Deering regarded the shoes with approval, which Mrs. Gregor would fain have seen mixed with admiration; but that quality was not in the glance.

"Well, hurry the fish in to Gee. I'm faint and weak as a kitten," the chap-eron broke in abruptly, making a *moue*

at the major when he chuckled at the comparison. "You young things may be able to live on fresh air and mountain scenery, but I require some solid nourishment."

Deering obediently started toward the boarding-house kitchen with the trout, but Miss Lansing stopped him.

"Let me show them my prize first," she said, and he held up the string while she selected a particularly fine one from the number. "It must weigh five pounds, at least," she declared, holding up the speckled beauty by the tail.

The major and Mrs. Deering greeted this statement with a shout of derision.

"If it's a pound, you may think yourself a lucky child," said the major.

"A pound!" retorted Miss Lansing, indignantly. "I just wish you'd had to land him—then you would know! Just heft it," she said, holding it out to Miss de Veny for her corroboration.

But that young lady shrank back from the slippery object with a very real shudder of repugnance.

"Oh, I could not touch it," she said.

Miss Lansing looked a trifle dismayed for a moment, then gave a rippling laugh of amusement and slid the fish on the willow without another word. The glance Philip Deering bent upon the delicate French beauty was a curious mixture. Mrs. Gregor, not being able to decide whether sympathy or perplexity predominated, addressed herself abruptly to Miss de Veny. "You will change your mind when it's cooked," she said; and the major chuckled.

"Where's Billy?" suddenly asked Deering, as he turned again to the kitchen.

"Billy?" echoed the major in amazement. "Didn't he go with you?"

"Why, no——" began Deering, when Mrs. Gregor burst out: "And he promised—he said he would go sure." The disappointment in her tone was unmistakable. Deering looked mildly surprised.

"He turned back at the last minute. The foreman sent word that they had struck a new ledge, and he made for the cage at a great gait. And he has not come up yet."

"Oh, we need not expect him now until the new shift goes on," returned Mrs. Gregor, in a resigned tone. "If he is having an orgy with a pick, no power on earth can lure him away from it."

"I move that we don't give him a bite of these trout," said Miss Lansing; and the motion was carried without a dissenting voice.

Dinner hour at the mine was marked by great activity. Crowds of brown-overalled, blue "jumpered" men made their way from the bunk houses and mill to the boarding house, a long, low shack that clung limpet-like to the steep side of the mountain. Within, the large mess room presented a scene that few women's eyes had ever beheld: row after row of long wooden tables, bare of cloth or ornament, bearing only food, and the few implements that this crude civilization demanded; overhead, two sputtering arc lights, their glare revealing all the ugliness of the greasy boards and smoke-blackened walls; two hundred men, natives of a dozen nations, their face and garments alike bearing the marks of toil in the earth, a dozen sleek Chinamen in immaculate white waiting upon the horde—the heathens presenting a startling contrast to the dirt and grime of the Christian nations they served.

"Behold the Olympians dining!" Philip Deering threw wide the door, and the guests from the cottage peered curiously in.

Cameron Lansing's cursory glance grew into a look of fascinated interest as the elements of the scene grew upon her: the eager, hungry faces, alight with the good humor of the human animal at feeding time, seen through the haze of steam arising from huge trays of steaming hot viands and from two hundred tin cups of boiling coffee; the only sound intelligible among the confusion of tongues, the deep-throated laughter of Greece and Italy; the half-wailing intonation of Norway and Sweden; and the occasional loud guffaw of hearty Ireland. The girl stood drinking in the scene, absorbed in the study of faces before her, oblivious of the claims of her own appetite or of the rest of the party.

Aimée de Veny had given one glance around the room, one horrified look at the crowd of hungry animals; saw there only unshaven jaws, grimy hands and greasy garments; heard the rattle of heavy crockery and the discordant din of human cries and gutturals; and shrank back with a gesture of disgust. It was quite unfeigned, as unassumed as the expression of distaste in her eyes. The major, feeling a throb of sympathy for such acute sensibilities, withdrew with her, and began chatting lightly, in an attempt to dispel the unpleasant impression.

Philip Deering, standing beside the other girl, did not notice their absence. For the first time in his life he saw a woman who viewed this spectacle with his eyes; who saw not only its black, unbeautiful aspect, but also the happy camaraderie of all these mixed elements—his West, a scene more cosmopolitan, perhaps, than could be found elsewhere on the globe.

"Isn't this splendid?" she cried, turning at last with shining eyes.

"Just what I think!" he returned, and gripped her hand appreciatively.

One of Mrs. Gregor's plump hands patted the other ecstatically; but she was not looking at the men.

The appearance of a trim little Jap bearing a tray brought them all to the table in the small apartment adjoining the big mess room; Miss de Veny between the major and a young college man, introduced by Deering as assistant engineer of the Olympus; Mrs. Gregor presiding at the head of the board, with an empty chair on her left, intended for her delinquent brother, Billy; Miss Lansing and Deering at the foot. The latter was in high good humor.

"Let me present to you, ladies and gentlemen," he said, as soon as all were seated, "Hibi, cup-bearer on Olympus!"

The young Jap grinned amiably and scraped his foot in a bow. He was as chubby and cherubic as the modern pictures of *Puck*; his broad nose, which began literally "right up in the roots of his hair," fairly glowed with good nature; his beady black eyes held a gleam

of hidden mischief. Miss Lansing laughed outright.

"He's a dear!" she declared; and again Deering's eyes rested on her interestedly.

"Put those trout in front of this young lady," he commanded of the almond-eyed waiter. "And if they're not cooked to perfection, you tell Gee I'll hang him by his queue to-morrow."

Miss Lansing had finished serving when Billy Sturgis made his entrance. He was greeted with a loud cry, in which his sister's voice could be heard above all the rest.

"Now, I should like to know what I've done?" he returned, in an aggrieved tone.

"Billy," admonished his sister, "there are sins of omission as well as commission. Where have you been all afternoon?"

"Why, down on number fifteen—anything wrong in that?"

"When he might have been on the heights of Olympus!" Miss de Veny lifted her voice for the first time.

"Well, I'm just an ordinary mortal and have to work. The rest of you are having a holiday, but I'm not here for my health," he retorted in the same tone of banter.

"Well, your holiday begins from to-day," broke in Philip. "Let this young grad here see how he can run things. You are a part of a party, Bill, and we can't have you disappear like a stage Lucifer—to the nether regions through a trapdoor—just when we have planned a *partie carrée*."

"Oh, I say, Phil, I can't leave just now. We've opened up the prettiest little vein—why, the ore in there will assay—" A shrill chorus of expostulating "ohs" made him break off abruptly. He turned his serious gray eyes upon each woman in turn with a glance of such mingled perplexity and disapproval that the college man went off into a gale of unexplained laughter. The superintendent thereafter applied himself diligently to his dinner, and, to the disappointment of the other diners, never even noticed that he was left out in the fish course.

"Billy, you promised." Mrs. Dot had pounced on her brother as the party were wending their way to the cottage after dinner.

"Promised what?"

"To go fishing this afternoon."

"Well, why should you be so set on it? Don't you get enough to eat here?"

"Oh, Billy, you ought to take something for it! It's awful—your density, I mean. One man and two girls fishing—"

"One of them is sure to catch him," he interrupted, flippantly; "so I don't see my use in their game."

"One of them is sure—and that is why I am anxious. It would be dreadful to have the wrong one get him, now, wouldn't it?"

"That it would," cheerfully. "Which one is wrong? And by what means am I to keep her from spoiling the other's sport?"

"You know as well as I. Who would need two glances to tell the real article from the sham?"—with a gesture toward the two girls in front of them.

Billy Sturgis looked, studying the two with a whimsical smile playing about his rather severe mouth. "They look like good, average samples, both of them, to me. But you never can tell. The one has a bright glint about her, but she might not assay a grain of gold to the ton—all that glitters, you know. The other might go as high as two hundred ounces, and again—"

"If you would employ an interpreter, I might grasp your meaning. As it is, I know you are just trying to hedge. You are the most unnatural man I know; here are two of the most attractive girls that one meets in a lifetime, and you flee from them as if they were the plague. I am not asking or expecting you to fall in love with either—I am well aware that anything that can't be milled or smelted never interests you for a moment, and neither Aimée nor Cameron could ever be stamped or crushed, thank goodness. But you might at least pay them the attention you would some of the specimens in that old cabinet of yours. And your friendship for Phil—"

"My friendship for Phil is just what keeps me underground—hunting the stuff he spends so carelessly. But since he has granted me a holiday, I will play utility man while the leading lady gets in her deadly work." A groan at the unpleasant prospect enraged Mrs. Dot, but she was forced to content herself with his reluctant promise.

There was the chill of high altitudes in the air, the chill from ice-rimmed springs and snow-filled hollows where the summer never creeps; the chill of night when the sun has dropped suddenly like a spent ball below a horizon chopped and jagged like the teeth of a huge saw. They built a fire, log-cabin style, of pine logs and quaking-asps, crowning the top with some green firs that crackled and spit and sent the sparks flying in gleaming showers. The "house party" sat in semicircle about the flaming pile, retreating foot by foot as the outer logs caught fire and sent out an intolerable heat. The young "grad" had brought out an antiquated banjo and tinkled a choppy accompaniment to the occasional outbursts of song—"Bedelia" and "Juanita," rivals in popularity, with the "Soldier's Farewell" bearing them both hard.

Mrs. Dot and Major Corliss sat and quarreled on a diminutive Navajo blanket; Cameron Lansing shared part of a buckboard seat, loosed from its original moorings and anchored to the ground, with Billy Sturgis—the latter miserably conscious of his sister's fury, because he had blundered into the seat intended for Philip Deering. Their host, with no sense of his loss, apparently, had spread a rug over a projecting shelf of rock for Miss de Veny, and, having assured himself of her comfort, had thrown himself full length at her feet.

Mrs. Gregor noted with covert satisfaction that the relative positions of the two put a stop to low-toned conversation. She failed to notice that, while Deering was in the shadow, the angle at which he reclined gave a clear and gorgeously illumined view of Miss de Veny's face in the red gleam of the bonfire, a view of a perfect profile, long, dark eyes and silken lashes sweeping a

cheek that glowed splendidly in the dancing light; of her soft hair, loosened by the night breeze, rolling and blowing back from a forehead pure as ivory. Nor did it prevent his catching her sweet, low tones as she sang an alto to "Juanita," or laughed a low, silver laugh at his own attempts at tenor.

Sturgis lost nothing that eyes might see, and felt some envy for his friend's freedom from the carking care that sat so heavily upon his own soul. His position brought him unpleasantly close to a girl he hardly knew. Unpleasantly? Well, hardly that; he caught himself twisting to look her full in the eyes—those wonderful violet eyes, with the rim of deep purple about the iris. Thus near to her, he seemed to feel the magnetism of her warm youth, the strong pulse of her magnificent physique, a vivid freshness that was almost a radiance.

"Shall I get you a pick and a magnifying-glass?" Miss Lansing had suddenly flushed under his close scrutiny, and had turned her disconcerting eyes upon him. His boyish look of guilt won him no quarter; she continued to look accusingly at him, until the man his sister alone knew came to his aid.

"I should need a crucible and a fiery furnace to test you thoroughly," he replied, doggedly returning her quizzical glance, the while his bashful soul was longing for an honorable chance to retreat.

"You seem ready enough with a 're-tort!'" she gave a little apologetic laugh for the pun, and then persisted: "Are there no surface indications to guide you?"

"They are so often misleading," was his short reply. He waited for the return thrust; but, as an equivocal shrug was her only answer, he suddenly rose, under the pretext of kicking a toppling log back into the center of the fire.

As his great frame, lean, well-knit, with its broad shoulders and long arms, was outlined against the red glare, Cameron Lansing felt the first stirrings of interest in the man. She had been a bit resentful at being left to amuse, or be amused by, this shy young man, while

her host, almost her declared lover, reclined at the feet of a French siren—veritably, to-night, a Lorelei of the rocks. She repaid his former unconcealed scrutiny by an examination equally searching. Outside of his herculean frame, he was certainly not handsome: rebellious light-brown hair, big nose, stubborn mouth, outlines too rugged to be attractive—even the clear gray eyes, which might have palliated his plainness, were too thoughtful to liven up the seriousness of the whole face. But they could lighten—she had caught a gleam that spoke of undercurrents of passion that might some day break up the cold severity of that face, and make it burn as— She found herself wondering what type of woman would be able to set the torch to that underground mine. She studied him with unconsciously riveted gaze.

"How do you like the Billy Sturgis?" He had returned to his seat only half reluctantly—her searching glance had not escaped him, and he was on his mettle now.

"Well," she answered, turning teasing eyes upon him, "he covers a great deal of territory, but I have not sunk my shaft deep enough yet to find out whether he'll pay."

"He won't," he said, keeping up the figure—it was a discreet cover to dangerous frankness. "Too many base metals present; it would be an unprofitable process to extract the gold—if there is any! For my part, I had rather prospect virgin ground." To his own surprise, he found himself brave enough to challenge her glance. She decided that she liked his deep-set eyes, and let her own tell him so, whereat he looked away in a confusion that delighted her. She pursed up her lips.

"Our figures of speech have as many ingredients as plum pudding," she said. Then, with a shiver: "My face is cooked to a blister, and my back is stiff with cold. Sing 'Good-night, ladies,' and then we will take the hint."

Sturgis had instantly peeled off his coat; but Miss Lansing would have none of it. "I've seen Mrs. Dot nodding for an hour," she insisted, "and the major

will get rheumatism if he stays out a minute longer."

"Rheumatism—a boy like me!" protested the insulted major; but his protest was drowned in Mrs. Dot's plaint that she *hadn't* nodded! But they rose with the rest; and none showed greater alacrity in reaching the cottage.

"Oh, I am too sleepy to stir!" sighed Aimée de Veny, leaning her head back upon her crossed arms and smiling up into Deering's face as he stood ready to help her down.

"Then stay," he begged, sinking down on the narrow ledge beside her, his shoulder brushing her soft hair. The fire had died down to a dull glow now, and the others could not see them.

Miss de Veny's hands came down in a little French gesture. "But—the chap-eron!"

The remark was one no American girl would ever have made; for a moment Deering felt vaguely uncomfortable. Then, making allowances for her foreign training, he laughed a little. "We are free from those shackles in the West," he said, lightly. "We merely 'conform' because it is swell!"

"I like your West," she said.

"It's God's country," rejoined Deering. "You have no idea how a man grows to feel—why, I am perfectly wretched out of sight of these hills." His glance swept the circle of cloud-like masses about them.

"I do not quite love them yet," she said, slowly. "There is too much awe in my feeling. They are so big, so vast—they make one feel such a worm!"

"Poor little worm!" he exclaimed in a queer tone.

She raised her head quickly and let her glance meet his; through the half light her eyes glowed like dark opals. A silence fell between them.

The night was full of a sweet, world-like spell: the scent of pines, the ripple of the threadlike creek as it tumbled headlong down the mountain, the occasional soft patter of cones loosed by the breeze—a peace unbroken save for the muffled panting of the engines from over the hill.

"My bracelet!" Miss de Veny felt

about for it; and his hand, seeking, too, met hers. It was as small and soft as a child's. His fingers closed over it.

"Philip!" Mrs. Dot's powerful, carrying tones came from the direction of the cottage.

"Miss de Veny has lost something," he called back, groping again and finding only his companion's other hand. It clung to his for a moment; then both were withdrawn hastily. Miss de Veny gave her low, delicious laugh of amusement. "I—I thought I had the bracelet!" she said.

The look she gave him was only half-ingenuous; but it passed with him. He sought to find her hand again, but with a little laugh she sprang unassisted from the rock, and was halfway to the cottage before he caught up with her. "You see," she said, roguishly, a little out of breath, "there is need of a chap-eron!"

A fiery effulgence shone from the east, its glorious rays thrown flat against the eastward slopes of the mountains, brave in their garment of a myriad hue—the pale tints of wild flowers against the dark green of shrub and underbrush, the glossy sheen of spring-tipped pines, the silver of feathery quaking-asps crowning tall, white, naked trunks—the rocky peaks jutting into the blue-like temple spires, or roughly battlemented, rearing a forbidding front like mediæval prison towers. The garish red buildings of the mine, perched high on the mountain side, obtruded like vulgar upstarts into nature's magnificent pageant.

Within the shaft house, at the entrance to the cage, where the restless cables hoisted their burden of treasure from the deeps, Mrs. Gregor and her charges were engaged in an altercation—not the first that had enlivened their week on Olympus. The corpulent lady had given one look down the well-like hole into which the cage had dropped, black as Avernus, its sides damp with trickling water—and then had drawn back with a shiver of horror.

"Trust my weight to that frail thing down *there*—never!" she had declared.



In vain did Deering order the cage, loaded with eight sturdy "muckers," to demonstrate its carrying powers and absolute safety. Neither was the interview with the engineer, who with hand on lever regulated the speed of the cage, and obeyed the bell language to the letter, sufficiently reassuring to tempt her down the yearning abyss. Equally unwilling to allow the two girls to go unchaperoned, she kept them in a ferment for an hour, while Major Corliss teased, Deering stormed, and the girls alternately begged and insisted.

It was Sturgis who finally put an end to argument. Coming out of the engine room with his arms full of hats and wraps, he said, shortly: "We are going down *now*. Sis, you look after the engineer—since you regard him as untrustworthy, we will install you as guard over the incompetent creature. Mrs. Grundy can be shocked at our unchaperoned state if she wants to be—or she may betake herself back to the effete East, where she belongs, and leave the children of the West to Dame Nature, who has a lot more sense. Put these on, girls—they are not very pretty, but they will keep your duds clean."

They were not the most attractive of garments that Sturgis proffered—superannuated felt hats, dejectedly drooping as to brim, and daubed with candle-grease; long "slickers," likewise sperm-splashed, and hideous in their masculine shapelessness. Cameron Lansing laughed delightedly as she thrust her arms into the capacious sleeves and pulled the hat down to her eyebrows.

Miss de Veny, pleasantly but very firmly, refused Deering's aid in getting into a similar costume. "Thank you," she said, "I will go as I am."

Sturgis looked in dismay at the trim-fitting, spotless corduroy. "The mud and candle-grease will ruin your suit," he protested.

"It does not matter—this is *centuries* old," she assured him.

Sturgis' shrug was so exactly a copy of Miss de Veny's Frenchy gesture, that Cameron Lansing with difficulty hid a smile.

"Now hold to that bar; don't lean

over the edge; and we'll be down there before you can draw a long breath," Sturgis commanded.

The sudden, sheer drop of two thousand feet is not a pleasant sensation. The sickening sense of falling through space that one feels sometimes in dreams—the dizzy, helpless breathlessness that often awakens one with a gasp of horror—approaches it most nearly. Miss Lansing drew her breath sharply and tightened her grasp upon the iron bar above her head; the roar past her ears was deafening, but she could hear Miss de Veny give a shrill cry of terror. When the electric lights from one of the levels glared in upon them, it showed the frightened girl clinging with blanched face to the arm of Philip Deering.

They rested a moment at the bottom of the shaft for Miss de Veny to recover from her faintness. But she still looked a little white and timid as they struck out into the tunnel. It grew damper and darker as they went on, and still the black hole yawned before them. Occasionally there lumbered by one of the ore cars heaped with a glistening cargo, that flashed in the light from the candles stuck in the men's caps.

Cameron Lansing splashed along in the muddy space between the rails with the glee of a child wading in a forbidden puddle, scorning Sturgis' admonition to "come out of the wet." "I haven't had so much fun since I was ten!" she declared.

Miss de Veny chose to be prudent, and walked tight-rope fashion on one rail, balancing herself by resting a finger tip on Deering's shoulder—a form of progress necessarily slow. The others waited for them at the cross-cuts—pauses which Sturgis filled with useful information regarding winzes, drifts, and the like; all of which Miss Lansing listened to gravely, the while her eyes, undetected in the fitful, wavering light, took in the man's eager, interested face, afire with love of his work. The big brown Titan needed just such environment to soften the rugged outlines of his great head and bulk. In the heavy top boots that he wore, the belted trous-

ers and negligee shirt, open at the throat and guiltless of tie, most men would have been indistinguishable from the ordinary "mucker" who wields a pick at three dollars a day; Billy Sturgis was as distinct from the horde as a Brummel in an unkempt mob of the Latin Quarter.

They had reached a "stope" now, in which the men were working; the air reverberated with the rhythmic fall of hammer upon drill, the softer stroke of picks, and the roar of ore being dumped into the chutes. The walls and ceiling of the chamber threw off points of light, like millions of diamonds, where the candle rays struck the galena and the facets of the quartz.

Miss Lansing gave an exclamation of delight as she caught sight of the illuminated cave. She was pressing forward eagerly—when suddenly a warning cry from one of the men rang out:

"Look out there—God!"

Dropping candles and implements in their panic, the men rushed frantically toward the tunnel. A huge boulder, just to the left of the supporting timbers, loosened by a careless pick, had fallen with a crash—in the darkness and confusion it was impossible to know whether or not all had escaped. A sudden, awful groan told the story—not less terrible, because so common among them—some one had been pinned beneath the mass.

There was a rush to his assistance, hurried orders, relighting of candles—confused helplessness mingled with the fear of more loose débris. Regardless of danger, Sturgis had sprung forward without a moment's hesitation, snatched a crowbar from a wild-eyed Swede, and with prompt, energetic action had set about releasing the imprisoned victim.

"Lend a hand, all of you!" he cried. "It has caught his leg—for God's sake, hurry!"

There was a clinching of teeth, a tugging, a straining of knotted muscles—and the huge weight gave. Sturgis, whose great back had almost broken under his mighty effort, straightened up with difficulty, turned to help the wounded man—and found Miss Lans-

ing sitting on the ground with the poor fellow's head in her lap.

"This is no place for you," he gasped.

"Indeed it is!" she cried, her features drawn with pity as she bent over the ghastly face on her knees, and wiped the sweat from the sufferer's forehead with her own soft handkerchief.

Philip Deering, who had instantly sprung to Sturgis' assistance, spoke to her with more authority. "Cameron, let me take your place. Miss de Veny is in the tunnel—stay with her till we get this poor chap to the top—we'll come back for you. I insist!"

"And I insist that I will not leave him until he is in the doctor's hands! Don't waste argument—lift him at once. Oh, be gentle!"

Clumsy hands had improvised a rude stretcher, padded with shirts and jumpers, to soften the iron of pick and crowbar; and the same hands, tender as women's, raised the wounded miner and bore him to the cage. Cameron and Deering, leading the way in the tunnel, suddenly came upon Miss de Veny huddled in the mud in a pathetic heap—overcome by dizziness and horror, she had quietly fainted away. Sturgis, just behind them, gave a disgusted exclamation: "What a time to faint!"

"Poor little girl!" was Deering's cry as he stooped and picked her up; the small, white face, appealingly beautiful in its helplessness, put all the horror in the background, and left him overcome at the thought of his brutality in leaving her alone. He stayed below with the unconscious girl, while Sturgis and Miss Lansing went up with Karylos, the wounded Greek. Miss Lansing had hesitated a moment before leaving Miss de Veny—the faint proved heavy and stubborn—but another glance into the agonized features of the crushed and bleeding man had decided her.

Before the cage came down again, Miss de Veny stirred. As light and consciousness crept back into the beautiful eyes, and color into the pale face lying so limply against his arm, a mighty wave of tenderness swept over Philip Deering. Every protective instinct, all the gentleness and chivalric

love of his nature, responded to the appeal of her dependence.

"You are better?" he whispered, not losing her from his strong clasp.

Memory struggled back and brought with it all that wretched scene. "Oh, the man!" she cried, struggling up. "Was he killed?"

"No, no," he reassured her. "Just badly hurt. They have taken him to the top—the camp surgeon probably has him now. Don't think of it again," he urged.

"Oh, I can't help it," she said, drawing a long, shuddering breath. "And I was such a coward—everything went black. And"—a swift wave of color surged over her face, and then subsided, leaving her whiter than before—"you had to carry me all the way?"

"It was nothing—I could carry you to the ends of the earth if"—his eyes held hers—"if you would let me."

For a moment she held off, trembling; then with a sigh, like that of a tired child, closed her eyes and leaned back in the cradle of his arms.

The men on the cage, which descended suddenly, thought her still in a faint.

"I knew something would happen," wailed Mrs. Dot. "Something's *always* happening, and nobody will be warned. If you had not taken matters right out of my hands, Billy——"

"Don't spend time over 'I told you so's,' Dot, until Miss Lansing has something to eat," interrupted her brother, shortly. "If you or the major will just tell Hibi to rustle some lunch over here, it would be much more to the purpose."

"Oh, I'll go!" cried Mrs. Gregor, promptly. "But I can't help saying, Billy," she flung over her shoulder, "that I don't see why you let Cameron make herself ill over that wretched Greek—she is the most foolish, headstrong——"

"She is the noblest creature God ever made!"

"Billy!"

Major Corliss followed the astounded chaperon along the uneven path to the

boarding house. "The best laid schemes o' mice and men," he quoted, sentimentously.

"Oh, major, do you think—he looked terribly serious, didn't he? And Cameron right there, too! I *knew* something would happen—but I never expected this. Why, he never *looked* at a girl before!"

"Oh, but she is glorious!" broke in the major, eager as a boy. "She is Florence Nightingale, Helen of Troy, and the Blessed Damozel, all in one. Those surly devils of Greeks will never give Phil another mite of trouble, I warrant you."

"It takes a woman to settle these labor questions," Mrs. Gregor remarked, sagely, "a Western woman. Fancy that poor, drooping lily—French *fleur de lis*!—swooning like an eighteenth-century heroine. I should think Phil would be glad to have shown her a real, live Western type of the feminine. He admires Cameron so!"

"Tremendously," agreed Major Corliss.

"And I am so afraid he is going to be disappointed—since she and Billy, you know——" Mrs. Dot lowered her voice discreetly. "I'm glad for Billy, of course, but I can't bear to have Phil all broken up."

"I hardly think," said the major, "that he is in need of your sympathy."

"And why?" asked Mrs. Dot, quickly. They were on the old dump now, and from that eminence, as they stopped a moment for Mrs. Gregor to get her breath, they could see their host and Miss de Veny emerging from the shaft house in response to the lunch gong. "How she leans on him!" remarked Mrs. Dot, a trifle scornfully.

"That's why!" returned the major.

Mrs. Dot looked frankly puzzled for a moment, until a second brazenly searching look at the advancing pair brought enlightenment. Then, meeting the major's triumphant glance. "What size?" she groaned.

"Seven, three-fourths," chuckled Major Corliss. "And white, Mrs. Dot—for weddings!"



# PENelope's HUSBAND

BY JESSIE KNIGHT HARTT



IN those awful preliminary moments when she strove to screw her courage to the sticking place, Penelope Sanborn's imagination leaped forward in wild surmise as to what manner of spot a real Boston editor's office might be. She looked herself over anxiously in the mirror of her narrow, single room at Wellesley before she started off through the golden October sunshine to catch the ten-fifty-five for town. She saw that her severe brown hat suited the waves of fair hair and the unexpectedly hazel eyes beneath, that her long tan coat was well brushed, that the soft brown silk tie was knotted properly under her linen collar, that the manuscript envelope in her brown-gloved hands looked duly business-like. Trigness was one of Penelope's pet idols. But she never guessed—for she was ludicrously ignorant of her own charm—what a flower-like impression her tall young figure, her delicate color, and her wide-eyed shyness would produce in the unaccustomed precincts of a sedate old magazine.

So she quaked inwardly all through the dusty half hour in the train, and quivered with misgivings as the all too swift elevator bore her upward to the editorial rooms of the *Age*. She found the anteroom a surprisingly cheery place. Its tinted, picture-hung walls and leather-covered armchairs looked reassuring and comfortable. So did the half-grown

office boy, whose manner was deferentially protecting as he answered her timid inquiry for the editor.

"Which editor, madam?" he asked, coming forward with one finger in the book he had been reading on her entrance. Penelope noted, with amusement, that the book was "*Romola*."

"How sweetly Bostonian!" she thought. "It's nice of the *Age* office to demonstrate its culture and courtesy the very first thing." But to her annoyance she found she had to swallow hard before she could make her voice steady enough to say: "I—I think it is Mr. Whiting I want to see."

The authority in buttons considered for a moment. "I believe Mr. Whiting left town yesterday afternoon, rather suddenly," he said at length. "However, if you will be seated——" and he departed upon a mission of research, having first possessed himself of her card and laid "*Romola*" upon his own little table, with a methodical bookmark between its pages.

Left alone, to sit in one of the leather-covered armchairs, looking at the framed drawings which adorned the opposite wall, and listening to the click-a-clack of many typewriters in adjoining rooms, Penelope felt her shyness ebbing away. That Chesterfieldian office boy was so appropriate to the portals of a conservative, time-ripened magazine like the *Age*! To her little home town in Vermont, Boston typified wisdom and elegance. Judging from her first ac-

quaintance in this office—which was also her first experience with any of Boston's inner workings—Vermont must be right.

Perhaps the interview she had so long dreaded would prove no ordeal, after all. She hardly cared whether she saw Mr. Whiting himself or not. "Any young assistant person will do for little me," she thought. What she really wanted was to find out if the *Age* cared to examine fiction by new writers, and if the subject of her modest little story would be acceptable in any case. She had been told that the best way to find out such things was to see the editor personally, so here she was.

Her best work and her most ardent sympathies had gone to the making of "Hannah's Husband." It was the simple tragedy of a hard-working woman whose husband had become a hopeless drunkard as the victim of a clever system whereby one man had made himself master of the longshore labor of a whole city, and gave his men half their wages in beer checks, redeemable at his own seven saloons. Penelope knew in her heart that the story was worth writing, and yet—would any editor think it worth printing? There might be some business reason—her feminine mind was vaguely aware of such possibilities—for which so mellow a periodical as the *Age* might not care to insert what her brother had called a "hard-luck story" among its engravings of the old masters, its optimistic reviews of the world's progress, its heavily illustrated memoirs of distinguished folks.

She had never happened to see a tale with a moral purpose and a tragic ending among all the polite periods and imposing signatures of the *Age*. But had she not breathed in, with the air of a Boston suburb, the notion that to have one's name in the richly ornamented monthly index of the *Age* was to make at one bound a dozen steps up the ladder of fame? Despite her external shyness, Penelope was adventurous at heart. When she was a little girl, in the orchard swing in Vermont, she had loved the catch in her throat which came from holding hard to the ropes

and hurling herself higher than any of the other children dared—up, up, among the apple blossoms and the startled orioles. It was a long drop back to earth, but you had had a glorious moment, and presently the swing sent you up again, higher than before.

She was renewing the delicious thrills of her childhood, and snatching a fearful joy from this exploit of bearding the *Age* in its sacred lair, when the Chesterfieldian office boy appeared from the inner regions, as polite as ever.

"Mr. Whiting is out of town, as I thought," he announced, "but Mr. Churchill will see you in a moment. He's Mr. Whiting's new assistant"—this in kindly response to Penelope's questioning look.

Then, with a deferential motion that gave almost the effect of a bow, he sank into the chair behind his little table in the corner. He offered Penelope a copy of the current number of the *Age*, and then, evidently considering that he had fulfilled the whole duty of an office boy in such matters, subsided into "Romola" once more.

Penelope tried to read, but she was too excited. The time of waiting seemed long; evidently visitors without previous appointments were not encouraged by the *Age* editors. She clutched the manuscript of "Hannah's Husband" nervously, and stole glances from behind her magazine at the framed sketches on the wall. They were monochromes mostly, touched up here and there with dabs of dull color. She idly wondered why.

Then she fell to formulating impressive sentences in which to address "Mr. Whiting's new assistant" when he should appear. He was called Churchill, was he? She had pleasant associations with that name. Her lips curved smilingly at the recollection of dear, funny, impetuous Lawrence Churchill—what larks they used to have together, two years ago, when he was in the "Harvard Law" and she an undergraduate at Wellesley! The smile died as she thought how time had changed since then. Now he was in Germany, or had been at last accounts—she had owed him

a letter for six months. And she was a "graduate student," distressingly respected by this year's seniors, hand-in-glove with faculty, getting older every minute, she felt viciously, as memories of past youthful pranks crowded in upon the theater of her maturer ambitions. However, maybe—

But her musings were broken off by the excited entrance of an eager-eyed young man from the inner room. He was a tall, slender, smooth-shaven fellow, whose very eyeglasses gleamed with interest.

"Penelope Sanborn!" he cried—not so loud as to shock the office boy, but with a warmth that emphasized the welcome of his outstretched hand. "I just this minute saw your card, and it was borne in upon me that *you* were 'the young lady in the anteroom.' Do tell me you haven't been waiting long. And what joyful wind brought you here?"

"Why, Laurie Churchill!" Penelope was as surprised and glad as he, but she was never voluble under such circumstances. The rising pink in her cheeks spoke her enthusiasm. "I didn't know *you* were the Mr. Churchill I was waiting to see. I thought you were in Germany—at Bonn—"

She sat down again helplessly on the chair from which she had just risen, and Churchill drew up another beside it.

"So I was in Germany," he said, "until about a month ago. I came home unexpectedly some time the first of September—illness in the family—all right now, but it wasn't worth while to go back again. I did some travel sketches—'wid pitchers,' as the vaudevillians say—for the *Age* while I was over, so Whiting somehow got the notion—aided slightly by my own suggestion, of course—that I'd be a help to him here in the office. I've been an editor for three whole weeks, Penelope, and it's amazing fun, especially since Whiting cleared out yesterday, leaving me to represent him for ten days. But tell me about yourself. Is Saul among the prophets? Are you, too, writing for the *Age*? How long it seems since those jolly days at Wellesley, when Freddie Lester and Jimmie Ford and I used to

go boating on the lake with you girls! Do you remember the time Nan Brewster sat on the lobster salad? And—"

"But do *you* remember," interposed Penelope, "*do* you remember the time Jimmie was 'sounding' in the middle of the lake with an oar and fell overboard just as he was declaring that it was a toy lake, anyhow, shallow enough to walk ashore from where we were?"

Lawrence Churchill threw back his dark head and laughed delightedly. "I do recall that scene of horror," he said. "How little Jeems did squeal to be taken into the boat again! He couldn't swim much, you know. And how foolish his new suit looked—he had arrayed himself in particular glory to impress you girls, I remember. I haven't heard from any of the old set for months. What has become of them all lately?"

"They're mostly teaching the young idiot how to shout," said Penelope; "at least, the girls are. Jim is studying for the ministry, and Fred—"

"But enlighten me about yourself," interrupted Lawrence in his usual erratic fashion. It was always difficult for him to await developments.

"Oh, me?" said Penelope, raising expressive eyebrows. "I'm at Wellesley again, doing post-graduate work. I spent last year at home, you know, trying to be a good daughter, and inventing things to keep myself busy. There isn't much ready-made activity in Bourneville. And I missed the girls so, it made me ache. Marking time isn't fun, now, really. But men have such a lot of genuine life to live, they can't understand, I suppose. My mother and father were glad enough to have me come back and work for a second degree, so—"

"But after that, what?" Lawrence Churchill's gray eyes, behind their shining glasses, had become very serious. "Shall *you* teach the young idiot, too?"

"Saints forbid!" Penelope's tone was positive. "I'm not a born teacher, and much experience as a victim has taught me that the other kind is no good. But as for my ambitions—I really had some business at the office this morning, though the fun of seeing you again



seems to have driven it out of my head. This—" she went on, with a sudden return of shyness, as she produced the manuscript from her lap, "is a story I scribbled off last year when I hadn't anything to keep me out of mischief, and Miss Foster, of the Wellesley English department, made me promise to bring it to the *Age*. I don't suppose the *Age* has any earthly use for it," she added, nervously, "but I promised Miss Foster, so—will you please look at it some time? She thinks, you know, that to have a thing published in the *Age* is a sort of canonization, and reflects sanctimony on your *alma mater*."

Lawrence took the envelope from her clinging fingers and peered into it. "Somehow I hadn't thought of Penelope Sanborn as a writer-lady," he said. "But your little effort hath a goodly outside," he added, reassuringly. "Not rolled, no blue ribbon, and yet again wonderful, it's typewritten! That's well done for a beginner, Pen. You should see some of the manuscripts I've had the pleasure and privilege of beholding lately! This is fiction, you say? Well, I'm free to admit that the *Age* has present need of such. When Mr. Whiting departed this office, yesterday afternoon, he bade me keep a sharp lookout for new geniuses. Perhaps you're they—who knows?"

"Maybe," said Penelope, trying to speak lightly, as she arose and buttoned her coat. "Anyhow, I mustn't take up any more of the editor man's valuable minutes, especially as I have to hurry off to keep a luncheon engagement at one. What an unconscionable time we've been a-talking, by the way! But do let me say one last farewell to that envelope—my wee lamb! I hate to leave it with anybody, even you. It's sure to be lonely, for it has lived with me all its little life." Her tone was whimsically caressing. Lawrence felt as if he should like some of its tenderness for himself.

He interposed between her and the door. "You won't want to wait for a letter about this," he suggested, glancing down at the manuscript which had just been the recipient of her swift little pat.

"May I go out to Wellesley the last of the week—Saturday afternoon, if you aren't busy then—and tell you—"

"That the rejection of a manuscript does not necessarily imply any lack of merit," interrupted Penelope, with a glibness that cast light on some of her futile occupations of the past year. "Yes, do. I'm not busy on Saturday afternoons, and you'll be a great deal nicer than a printed slip. Come on the one-forty-eight, and we'll have a long afternoon on the lake, to console you for its hurting you more than me. Oh, yes, I have Nan's boat now—the same old boat. She sold it to a '98 girl, and I bought it back into the family this fall. If it's stormy on Saturday, we'll light a fire in the parlor—I'm living at Faxon Hall again this year, largely for love of that enormous old fireplace—and you can dry my tears there. Do come!"

And with another backward glance over her shoulder, she was gone. The room looked suddenly very blank. Lawrence turned back reluctantly to his prosaic roll-top desk in the inner office. His pursuit of offending commas was disturbed that afternoon by sundry grave speculations as to what, after all, was the specially potent charm of his old friend Penelope's changing face. It was her eyes, he decided. With her delicately regular features, the faint rose-pink of her cheeks, and the fair hair that rippled away from its parting above her white forehead, the girl might, perhaps, have looked insipidly pretty. But her eyes were large, a thought too full for perfect proportion, and hazel—you somehow expected melting blue ones under those gold-tipped lashes, and the reality was piquant. It was not insipid regularity indeed which Lawrence Churchill had known and cared for in the Penelope of two years ago. Delicate audacity, freakish flashes of talk and sudden fits of silence, impulsive actions and swift second thoughts—those made up the girl's character as he had seen it. But now he felt, rather than saw, an underlying sweetness and steadiness that made him anxious to renew the old friendship—so lightly begun and suspended, but never really dropped.

He thought of her story-writing venture, however, with a sigh and a smile. "Saul among the prophets," indeed!—a white kitten among Percherons, rather. The idea of Penelope as an author was almost pathetic. Was she aware of the years and experience—and solidity—of the average *Age* contributor? Well, he would look at her poor little story, be as kind to it as possible—he was devoutly thankful, as a friend, of course, that it had fallen into his hands rather than into those of a stranger—and then, also kindly, but quite firmly, he would point out to its pretty writer the futility of her efforts.

"Doubtless the child has some knack of expression," he thought. "With a slight plot and a Dolly-Dialogue sort of heroine she might do rather well. But that isn't the kind of story the *Age* wants. Perhaps one of the cheaper magazines—" The hint of new maturity in her face haunted him, but that, at best, could not signify the ripened intellectual experience which the *Age* particularly valued. Despite its alleged appetite for new writers, this stately magazine would not accept anything that could possibly be stigmatized as second rate or frivolous. No fiction not emphatically good could force its way into the columns which had been Boston's pride for generations.

So, in dread, Churchill shirked reading Penelope's manuscript until the last possible moment. Friday afternoon he felt that duty could no longer be deferred, so he extracted the long, bulky envelope from a pigeonhole, pulled out the lowest drawer of his desk for a foot rest, tilted back in his swivel chair, and fell to. The first sentence, to his surprise, was captivating. The second made him smile. With the third he sat up straight and began to pay strict attention. As he dug deeper and deeper into the story, he cast aside the type-written pages so carelessly that they formed a ragged heap around him. The narrative—naïve, artless, unpolished though it was, as he had foreseen—had yet the compelling touch of genius. It gripped his interest, it made him laugh at times, and at times it made his spec-

tacles grow dim. In short, it was a human document—real, vital, significant. When he put the last sheet down, he drew a long breath and reverted to the phraseology of his college days. "Jove!" he murmured, "it's a corker! And how she does flay that boss-stevedore-amalgamated-rumseller scoundrel. His double-edged corner in labor and liquor is the most convincing villain element I've met with in recent fiction."

The touches of comedy in the story he found delicious—the tragedy grim, real and inevitable. The crudities of style were immaterial; they could be readily chiseled away. The careful editorial labor of one day would make "Hannah's Husband" a work of art. A word deftly substituted here, a sentence tightened there, two paragraphs interchanged in position, a few irrelevant generalities cut out—he saw plainly what was to be done. As he smoothed his rumpled hair and mentally returned to earth, he thought complacently of Mr. Whiting's parting admonition to "find a new genius while I'm gone, then you'll be worth your salt, young man."

"Won't he shout when I show him this!" mused the youthful assistant, in triumph. Then he thought of Penelope anxiously awaiting his august verdict all this long week, probably unable to concentrate her attention on Professor Foster's courses. He must relieve that strain without delay. But it was significant that he no longer thought of her as a white kitten. It was respect, thinly veiled in flippancy, that prompted his telegram to her: "Canonization complete. Am bringing out halo tomorrow afternoon."

She met him at the station on Saturday, a radiant figure in pale tan, the October sunshine warm upon her fair hair and her floating blue scarf. It took him back to what they both affectionately called "the dear old days," to see her so, hatless, with gloved hands, her eyes dancing with excitement, her mouth demure under the curious gaze of the half-dozen younger girls who stood about on the station platform, waiting for the next train to town.

"It isn't quite like old times," she de-

clared, striving to chat unconcernedly, as they shunned the attentions of clamorous public carriage and "barge" drivers and made their way around the corner of the station. "The girls seem so young and so—so unimportant, somehow. I miss the old crowd, and I *hate* to be deferred to by the seniors—look, there are three of them over by the drug store, don't they look overjoyed at the new dignity of their caps and gowns? But the faculty are perfect dears. Miss Foster—you remember her—she and I are great chums now. It's immense fun, being hand in glove with the Olympian goddesses. I carried a message into the academic council yesterday afternoon and wasn't scared a bit."

They had been walking across the village square, gay with scarlet-berried shrubs and brilliant green turf. Now they turned into Washington Street, under yellowing arches of elm boughs, crunching dried leaves under foot. The earthy smell of autumn stimulated Churchill's nerves like wine. He had been caged in the city so long that this sniff of the open felt doubly delicious. But Penelope's assumed indifference to his mission here was tantalizing.

"Now," he said, abruptly, as they passed a crowd of chattering, bareheaded girls, "why don't you comment on my telegram, you unfeeling young woman?"

Penelope's color deepened. "I—I'm so happy," she faltered. "I don't dare talk about it for fear the spirit should move me to dance a Highland fling right here in the middle of the sidewalk. I'm sitting on my own safety valve every minute, don't you see?" and the suppressed rapture shone out through her face so adorably that Churchill was satisfied.

"What did you do when you got the telegram?" he queried, with amused interest. "Tell me, honestly, did you dance a Highland fling then?"

"Did I!" Penelope's tone was convincingly joyous. Then, shamefacedly: "If you won't tell a soul, Lawrence Churchill—cross your throat now!—I'll confide in you what I did next. I—I—

hugged the maid that brought the message! Poor old Madge, she was meekly waiting to see if there was any answer, and I suppose she thought I'd gone out of my wits. I gave her a quarter, though, and told her what it was all about, so she hasn't reported me to the authorities. I *had* to embrace some one, you see, and Madge was the nearest person. She's the only soul about Faxon Hall who used to be there two years ago. Don't you remember her—the nice, clean little Irish body who used to bring up your card and Freddie Lester's when you came to see Nan and me? Madge always confessed to a weakness for 'thim two funny ladies in Number Fifty-Wan,' so, really, I don't believe she minds being hugged."

"I should hope not!" said Lawrence Churchill, with so much fervor that Penelope turned on him severely—only the twinkle in her eyes betrayed her.

"Don't be like Freddie Lester, now don't!" she implored him. "But I don't care," she went on, with blithe recklessness. "I couldn't be ferocious to a cat-thief to-day!"

She pulled off her gloves, rolled them into a ball, and let him put them in his pocket. "Like old times," he commented. Also she allowed him to praise her story, her cheeks growing pinker the while and the brown glints dancing in her eyes. Later, when they had reached the lake and embarked in the little boat that had been Nan Brewster's two years before, she left him to do the rowing and settled herself lazily in the stern, nestling among crimson cushions, and dabbling the tiller ropes over the gunwale. Lawrence cast an approving glance around at the hills, all scarlet and russet and gold in the afternoon light, at the yellowed oaks behind Faxon Hall, at the dark red of the drooping branches on the end of Tupelo. Then he tossed his soft felt hat into the bow of the boat, behind him, and tugged at the oars with a will. "This," he pronounced, glowingly, "*this* is somewhat like living!"

Then he wiled Penelope into telling him how she had come by the material for her story. In spite of his intended

tactfulness, she saw the element of surprise in his admiration for her work.

"I'm two years older than I used to be," she reminded him; "and, besides, I was never *quite* such an infant as you thought me. We were all playmates together—you and Freddie and little Jeems and Nan and I. We showed one another one side of our natures, the jolly-good-fellowship side. In the kind of larks we had together there wasn't any room for further revelations. But last year, you see, I hadn't any Nan. I hadn't any bubbling Harvard boys. I had to read newspapers and reviews and discuss things with my father. I *had* to grow up, you see. And when I went to visit Emilie Wheeler, her father was Mayor of Cleveland and head-over-heels in the business of fighting Ignatius Hinckey, the boss stevedore, who pays his men partly in beer checks, so I heard the thing talked of from morning till night. You see, the man's scheme is diabolically ingenious, and practically impregnable in its workings. He has put all his competitors out of business, till he has absolute control of the loading of grain vessels all along the water front. Then, not content with the trust in labor, he has bought up seven saloons and pays his men half their wages in beer checks, redeemable at his bars. With absolutely no education, he's the cleverest villain I ever heard of!"

"Yes," said Churchill, absently pulling along, with his eyes on his oars, "I've heard of the man before. He has a son in Boston, and rumors of his father's financial exploits have penetrated to these parts. But the hideous details were new to me, and somehow I hadn't thought of the personal side of it—as it affects the workingmen and their families, I mean."

"But that's just the horror of it," protested Penelope, leaning forward and excitedly slapping the hard ends of the tiller ropes against each other. "Don't you see? There are a dozen tragedies in the cases of his competitors whom he has forced out of business, but the tragedies of the workmen's families mount up into the hundreds. Such sordid, irremediable sufferings! Lots of those

men would be good enough if they were let alone, but they can't stand up against continual temptation. They're just children, mentally and morally. They need to be stood on their feet, and instead they are forced into the gutter. And their wives—oh, if you'd only seen that poor heartbroken Hannah! Yes, she's real—at least most of her is. The essential features of her story didn't need to be changed for purposes of fiction."

"Well," said Lawrence, "your tale isn't exactly a tract, Pen. You haven't done what people so often do—spoil a story to make a sermon—but you're going to get at your readers' hearts, and that's far more effectual than a formal appeal to their heads. Your work is strong and clear and sympathetic. It will do a world of good——"

"Oh, do you really think so?" Penelope bent forward eagerly, her eyes shining. "If I could make the readers of the *Age* see what I saw, hear what I heard—— Oh!" she broke off, "I'd just like to hit that man Hinckey so hard that he'd know it!"

"You can," said Churchill, with deliberation, "and I'll help you. I won't deny that 'Hannah' needs a little revision—you haven't had experience enough yet to make the technical end of it go as easily as it will later. And, of course, my decision isn't absolutely final—don't be alarmed, though"—as Penelope's face fell—"I know perfectly well what Mr. Whiting wants, or I shouldn't have ventured to send you that telegram. His approval is merely a matter of form, and he will be back next week to give it. But with that and a little editorial revision—if you will trust me to that extent—your story is bound to go, and go magnificently."

So they discussed details of publication, matched experiences, joked and enjoyed each other all the golden afternoon. Never had the girl been so charmingly herself, never had the man felt such a glow of enthusiasm for his profession. What a dear, sweet woman Penelope was becoming, he thought—what a wife for an editor! Their old-time comradeship had been passionless.

This renewal of it possessed perilous allurements. They forgot the other associates of their boy and girl frolics. Now there seemed to be only they two in the whole world.

They dined together in the village, and there, over the slippery fern-decked tables and minute eatables of the Tea Room, their intimacy grew apace. He took her back to Faxon Hall in the crisply chill moonlight, and watched her tall, graceful figure disappear in the familiar brick-arched doorway. Then he turned thoughtfully for his lonely walk back to the station. Was Penelope really determined to stay in Wellesley for her master's degree? Perhaps he could persuade her that second degrees were a mistake. Perhaps—

All the way to the train, delicious speculations floated in his head. The *Age* gave him a fair salary now, with prospect of advance. He had no debts, no one dependent on him. Then there was that budding periodical—a "weekly newspaper," it called itself—whose proprietor had approached the new *Age* assistant with meaning appreciations of his splendid education, his knowledge of the European press, his continental experience. He suspected that the *Planet* would pay him more than he was getting from the *Age*. It was true that the *Age* people were conservative, that he was continually running against little prejudices of theirs which he could not understand, and that Mr. Whiting had more than once impressed him as something of a time server. But these were small matters, and, on the whole, he liked the *Age*. Besides, was it not about to print Penelope's story? An admiring public would applaud and Mr. Whiting would get credit for discovering a new genius, but the assistant would know in his heart that he was the one responsible. He felt for the first time the supreme delight of his calling, the thrill of becoming matchmaker between authorship and fame. Penelope would write more stories, the *Age* would be acclaimed as not only sane, but courageous, and then—oh, assuredly he would stay with the *Age*!

He felt very gleeful as he boarded

his train—very much at ease with himself and the universe. He forgot to speculate about Penelope's feeling for him. Love—at a certain stage, at least—is as blind as the poets say. His exalted mood lasted all the next week, during which he somehow found it necessary to dispatch several special delivery notes to Penelope, and to make one unannounced call at Wellesley. "Business" was made to cover a multitude of confidential communications, and Penelope felt—as doubtless she was intended to—that her present and future literary happiness depended greatly upon the intelligent efforts of Mr. Lawrence Churchill.

But the next Monday afternoon, when she again met him at the station, bubbling with the joyful excitement that had possessed her of late, she was amazed at the change in his face. It was only two days since she had seen him, but he seemed to have grown years older in the interval.

"Dear me!" she cried, alarmed. "What has the editor gentleman been doing to himself over Sunday? Is it overwork, or—or what?"

Her evident concern seemed to cheer him somewhat. "No, it isn't overwork," he said. "It's—will you listen to those yelping Jehus! Let's patronize them for once, Pen. I want to get, as soon as possible, to some place where we can talk out things by ourselves."

He helped her into the back seat of a dilapidated surrey; and the driver started up his jaded nag with a superlatively uncalled-for display of whip-cracking.

"How things have changed in the past two days, even out here," said Lawrence, with a glance about him at the lowering skies, the branches which last night's gale had stripped nearly bare, and the thickened carpet of russet leaves on the gravel paths. "Can't we go out in the boat, in spite of the clouds? I think I could discuss matters better on the lake."

"I'm awfully sorry, but the boats were put away for the winter this morning," said Penelope. Everything seemed to be going wrong, somehow; her gay spir-

its were dashed. What *could* be the matter with Laurie?

She found out when they had reached Faxon Hall and settled themselves in two deep armchairs before a crackling wood fire, to "talk it over." The glow from the huge brick fireplace, their aloneness in the big, quiet room, the comfort of the cushioned chairs, seemed to soothe him, and he told her all that had happened on the ill-starred morning of that day. But, of course, being a man, he began wrong-end first.

"Whiting has vetoed our story, Pen," he remarked, abruptly, stretching out his hands to the blaze.

Penelope turned white. Her eyes looked bigger than ever, and very dark. "I know," she faltered. "I was afraid—it did seem too good to be true all the time. Mr. Whiting must have seen that it was no good." Then she sat up very straight in her chair and gripped an arm of it with both slender hands. "Don't mind, Laurie," she begged, trying to steady her voice. "Don't mind. I—I don't. It wasn't any good, anyway."

Her gallant bearing smote his heart. "I'm a hippopotamus at breaking things gently," he groaned in remorse. "Don't look as brave as that, child; you break me all up. Your story *was* good—is good—the best I've read in years. And it will go, too—you'll see! We'll show them!"

She shook her head, with a wan little smile. "It's awfully nice of you, Laurie, but if an older man and a competent judge—oh, I oughtn't to feel so upset about it, you know"—her voice broke as she choked down her hopes of a career—"but it was my first really serious attempt, and I loved my 'Hannah'—"

"Mr. Whiting is not a competent judge!" asserted Lawrence, hotly. "He's a time-serving hypocrite, and he's going to overreach himself badly in this matter. Pen, I'd put this thing prettily, for your sake, if I could. But, though it's all coming out right in the end—I'm *sure* it is—still, I'm somewhat shattered by this morning's rumpus."

"Tell me all about it," urged the girl, leaning toward him eagerly and biting

her underlip to keep it from trembling. "I can bear it, Laurie, truly I can!"

He rested his chin on his palm and tried to look at ease. "I won't beat about the bush any more," he said. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is this, then. When Mr. Whiting came back this forenoon I showed him your story, expecting—idiot that I was, not to understand his puny notions of literature!—that he'd praise me for my enterprise and wonder at my luck. Well, he did seem pleased with the opening sentences—they're *alive*, you know, Pen!—but when he read a page or two he brought the manuscript to me and said: 'I don't know about this, Churchill, it looks as if the original of Hippy Jim, the boss stevedore in this story, was a relative of a respected fellow-citizen of ours.' 'The original of Hippy Jim is Ignatius Hinckey, of Cleveland, if that is what you mean,' I said. Of course, Pen, no one who understands anything of Boston politics could fail to recognize the portrait of Jerry Hinckey's father—the facts have appeared too often in campaign documents for that. Well, then Mr. Whiting folded up the story and handed it back to me. 'You should have known we couldn't use this,' he said, in that austere manner of his that would infuriate a saint. 'And why?' I asked, trying to speak coolly, though I was as hot as Mount Pélée inside. 'Simply because,' he said, 'as you might have discovered, if you had taken the slightest interest in the business end of the magazine, Jerry Hinckey has negotiations well under way for a controlling share in the publishing company. Your salary and mine may depend on him next week.' 'And you're willing to wear Jerry Hinckey's collar?' said I. 'Surely there are other capitalists in Boston who would like to invest in such a steadily paying property as the *Age*. This is one of the richest towns in the country. Look at the good, clean money lying around loose here!'"

"Hurray!" interposed Penelope, softly, the color rising again to her cheeks. "Good for you, Laurie!"

Lawrence flushed, but went on stead-



ily. "I told him I'd undertake to find a purchaser for that share myself, but he smiled superciliously, and remarked that he hardly thought it was my affair. Also he said that one man's money was as good as another's—you know that old, sickening platitude. 'Mr. Whiting,' I said, 'do you honestly think that money got by the deliberate encouragement of drunkenness is as good as money acquired by ordinarily decent business methods?' And what do you think will be the literary future of the *Age* if it's run in the interests of Ignatius Hinckey and his seven saloons?"

"Good!" cried Penelope again, patting the arm of her chair by way of applause. A sudden shaft of late sunlight from behind the dull-colored clouds shot through a big window, and turned the loose waves of her hair to gold. "And what, then?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Mr. Whiting refused to discuss the matter," said Lawrence, "and he insisted that I should return the story. Think of it, Pen, after he had practically given me authority to accept what I thought best in his absence. Then, I do assure you, I waxed hotter than ever and said things—I can't remember just what now, I was too excited to notice. It wasn't merely that he hit me, but he hit you. Think of his sending me out here on such an errand—to return a manuscript that had already been accepted! Do you believe there's another magazine in the country that would do that? I know there isn't. Who ever heard of such a thing? And so," he concluded, making another desperate effort at nonchalance—"and so the upshot of it was—I resigned."

"Oh!" gasped the girl. She put out both hands to him, her eyes shining with tears. "Laurie," she said, under her breath. "You—you love!"

When they came back to earth again, the shadows had gathered in the far corners of the big room, and the great logs in the fireplace had crackled, glowed and dropped to crimson ashes. The sudden turning on of the electric lights from a switch outside the door startled them into self-consciousness,

and made them sit up quite primly in separate chairs. Lawrence, to hide some confusion, fumbled in his waistcoat for a highly unnecessary match, and in his nervousness dislodged two or three letters which had been in the inside pocket of his coat.

"Why, they haven't been opened!" said Penelope, helping him pick them up.

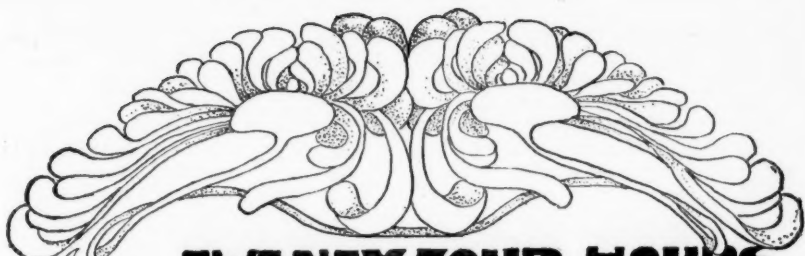
"No, they came just as I was leaving the office this noon. Only business letters," he explained.

"But this one looks interesting," persisted Penelope. "Lock, Laurie, here's the name of a magazine in the corner. *The Boston Weekly Planet*—oh, Laurie, isn't that the one you were telling me about the other day, the one that wants you to—oh, do open it, quick! I feel it in my bones that there's something nice in that letter." Her eyes sparkled as she thrust it into his hand.

He opened it indulgently, then his face beamed and he kissed his new-made fiancée then and there—in that austere Faxon Hall parlor, under the full glare of the electric lights. "You're right," he declared, exultantly. "You're *always* right, Pen. They've put that tentative offer of theirs in writing, and I'll close with it to-morrow, as I'm a sinner. Twice the salary the *Age* gave me, sweetheart, and a free hand in my own department. Hurray! Now we'll be married at Christmas."

And they were. Penelope gave up all prospect of her second degree without a pang. People said they were foolish to marry on promises from the *Planet*, which, as wiseacres pointed out, might not prove a permanently successful venture. But when "Hannah's Husband" and several other stories from young and vigorous writers appeared, and when the *Planet* acquired a reputation for forceful and charming literary work, the wiseacres saw a great light.

Mr. Whiting, of the *Age*, however, still shakes his head and indulges charitable fears. "Conservatism pays best in the end," he pronounces. "That young Churchill and his wife are rash—very rash. You say her new novel sells well? To be sure, there is always a public—of a sort—for sensationalism."



## TWENTY FOUR HOURS

BY ANNA A. ROGERS



FEBRUARY dawn in the tropics, and the daily combat of sounds begins between the great bronze bell of Santa Rosario and the little brass bugle sounding reveillé from the Quartel de Meisie; between conditions old and conditions new. The bell's loud clamoring to the reluctant spirit was full of ecclesiastical dominance and an ever-varying paradox of numbers—twenty-nine, a vibrating pause, twenty-eight, a slow six, a furious fifty and then silence; into which stole the lazy insolence of the bugle calling much more briefly to the ready flesh. Then came the bell again, then the bugle, then both clinching.

A city is under martial law, and history is being made, let the sacristan pull till his old muscles crack—the bugle's teasing note is destined to remain in command.

A few birds among the typhoon-haunted trees out in the dusty plaza began an unfamiliar twitter, notes far higher or far lower than in other zones. Then came the rattle of a *carromato*—was the early fare ending or beginning a day? One never knows. A dog barked

somewhere, proud of the brief vigor of that early sunless hour. The tattoo of wooden clogs hingeing loosely from native toe joints began to play the tune of Venice along the Schiavoni quay, recalling the sham of other fresh mornings setting false-faced before blinding, scorching days.

A small hand fluttered out like a white moth between the great green shutters of a front room near the corner of the Spanish hotel; then another hand, trembling a little, pushed them back two feet, and a pale face looked out upon the dreary plaza. Great, pathetic eyes, dark and distended, a nimbus of pale yellow hair about a delicately cut face, an emotional mouth and chin, a bit of cream-colored crêpe showing at the frail throat, from which escaped a half-sobbing sigh.

"Pretty bad, isn't it, Lila? Sensible child, to get a whiff of air before the sun comes. I do, every morning," said Mrs. Parksberry, cheerfully, from her window sill in the adjoining room, where she leaned frankly out in a blue chijimi kimono. Miss Fern looked across the space between the two windows and smiled with an uncertain hysterical movement of the lips. Mrs. Parksberry was gray-haired, with young, blue eyes, and at sight of the forlorn face turned toward her, laughed repressedly, as became the unlicensed hour.

"If I'd only known!" moaned Miss Fern.

"I suppose your brother doesn't feel the heat at night out on the ship, and can sleep; and didn't realize what it must be to you—a little New Hampshire Eskimo! And so he sent the cable that brought you out. He had an idea you'd enjoy it out here, and, boylike, he consulted me after the message had gone to you. I didn't wait for an invitation to come! The captain wrote it was no place for women; but I came, anyhow, and so I don't dare growl at the climate, within his hearing! But, my dear, you must learn to relax, the way these sensible Spanish women do. In costume, manners, mentally, just flop! Put on a chilly smile and as little else as military law allows, and by and by you'll get used to the heat as the rest of us have. I almost died the first week! I wrote a soul-melting farewell to Tom Parksberry, telling him he had my full consent to marry again, if only to learn how supremely happy he had been with me. Ten minutes after I had sent that note, along comes a batch of invitations from the fleet for Thanksgiving Day; breakfast on one ship, a dance on the flag-ship, dinner in my own captain's cabin, and home by moonlight with the army in the quartermaster's launch. And I with a dream of a costume that no one had ever seen—lilac mulle, *entre deux* to match; with pansies on the hat, the sweetest thing! I was perfectly wild to wear it—but there was that note to Tom! Well, to shorten a long story, I postponed my death and wore that dress to the continued performance, and faced Tom's laughter! I found out long ago that the one thing he never wearies of is my inconsistency."

"Dance in this temperature!" moaned Miss Fern.

"The more you dance, the cooler you get! Just wait till you hear a Filipino band playing a waltz at one of the small army hops! Why, Lila, the Pyramids would *chasser* up to the Sphinx and beg for a turn if they once heard it. The effect on me is something dreadful. I'm thankful Clarice can't see how her old mother is behaving out here—of course Tom holds it over me, trust him for that! She'll be through school before

many years, and then I suppose I'll have to settle down. Oh, dear! It's awful to have one's heart stay young and one's body grow old," and Mrs. Parksberry gazed with sympathetic eyes upon the weather-beaten trees down in the plaza. Lila's woeful eyes followed hers, her pretty head hanging upon the frail stem of her arm, like a great tropical flower.

Mrs. Parksberry turned and watched her companion for a moment, and became convinced that something must be done.

"There isn't a woman here touches you, Lila, for either looks or clothes, and you are the only navy girl in this world of men. I see your finish—the gemmed buckle of the equatorial belt!" Not a flicker of interest came into the big, brown eyes. Mrs. Parksberry had a theory that when vanity falls into coma within a woman's breast, the end is not far off.

"Lila Fern, haven't I known you since you were a scrap at Portsmouth? Haven't I been like an aunt and an uncle and several cousins to you for years? Well, then, you owe me something, and I'll take it out in obedience. Aren't you asked to Dr. Lucy's little dinner to-night at 'The Saint's Rest'? Yes or no?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, I want you to go—I'm going."

"I sent a regret yesterday."

"That doesn't matter in the least. Just write and say you've heard he was going to have ice cream, and so you've changed your mind."

"Why, Mrs. Parksberry!" came in soft horror from Lila.

"There are over two thousand 'officers and gentlemen' here, and exactly ten American women, and if our rights and privileges are not in perfect accord here and now, they never will be! Make the most of it, Lila, it's not likely to happen again in our time. And then"—she hesitated before the other's lack of humor—"and then he's *got* to have ice cream after that, you see! We're all mad for it in this iceless hostelry. Don't you feel it? Well, I do. You write that note, miss!"

"I'll do it, if only so that you shall

be sure of your ice cream," suddenly conceded Miss Fern, laughing, and Mrs. Parksberry was proud of her, and told her so.

"It's only a quiet little dinner—'pot luck,' he said. Four or six, I believe; he said something about a weakness in forks. It's only a stroll over the bridge to his quarters, and we needn't stay late. He does manage to have the best things to eat! We are all half starved, so the dear boy feeds us in turn, bless his heart! I told him one day I wanted him to wait till my Clarice grew up—I must have him in the family, somehow. Ever since then he's called my *belle mère*, and doesn't dare give a dinner without me. I'm sure it's meant for you to-night, as the latest arrival. The idea of 'regretting' a chance to escape from our table d'hôte—filet of buffalo, or worse!" There being no response, Mrs. Parksberry looked across the space and discovered that her companion had fallen asleep suddenly, her head on her hand.

"Lila, Lila child!" she cried, softly. "You must not stay there. Go back to bed and try to get a nap before the sun comes, as I always do. Good-night, dear, or good-morning, or whatever it is."

At that moment a military whistle, halfway through "Dixie," for comradeship on an early errand, crossed the plaza, and the two women laughed hysterically as they closed their heavy shutters with a snap. The façade of the hotel slept on with fast closed lids, defying the sun which rose a red ball of radiating fire.

Two hours later, both women were aroused from their heavy sleep by the tread of many feet in martial rhythm, and presently: "Compan-ee, halt! right shoulder humps! Order humps!" began the day's work out in the sweltering plaza, for men who were born to shoot, and ride, and hunt things down in the forest, but who held only a great laughing toleration for the novelty of barrack soldiering, upon which the old "non-coms" laid such gloomy stress.

Mrs. Parksberry saw that Lila's note to the young army surgeon was written

on the suggested lines, and consigned to the stolid care of Ah Loo, the former's Chinese *amah*, who did everything for her popular mistress but change the climate.

A little later the deprecatory rap of the Oriental sounded upon Miss Fern's door, and her faint, uncertain "*Entrar!*" discovered Ah Loo in dark purple linen, with a touch of light blue on the sleeves, be-ringed, be-earringed, be-braceleted in jade; a prosperous, stocky dame, imperturbable, graceless, harsh voiced, and of an age that seems common to all women of her enigmatic race.

"My catchee one piecee chit b'long missy," she remarked, briefly, holding out the doctor's reply to Miss Fern's tardy acceptance.

Not having met the newcomer, and supposing from the tone of her note that she was already one of the initiated, he had written in the prevailing tone of society in those days, when it was in the hands of half a dozen married women, before the feminine deluge came.

FAIRE PRINCESS: I am your humblest vassal, and my obscure castle walls shall kneel down at your approach to-night; torches shall flare, cymbals sound. Only—I wish to gracious you had said what flavoring you like best! Till death, BASIL LUCY.

Lila gasped and demanded an explanation from Mrs. Parksberry, who sought to untangle the psychology of the situation.

The day passed, as usual, in one prolonged fight against the lifeless humidity and heat; against voiceless things that crawl, and fly, and scamper; against dirt, disorder and Malay shiftlessness; against a bell-less *dormitorio* and invisible bellboys; against one's own senseless, helpless, heat-engendering fury, at which "the Aryan smiles" and successfully "weareth the Christian down."

Mrs. Parksberry went to drive at five, as did all the world, up and down the Luneta, and returned in the early dusk cool, rested, refreshed, serene, smiling, at peace with the equator, to find Lila standing on a chair in her great, pitch-dark room, trying to see herself in a mirror one foot square, hung for some

Don Quixote of a Spanish *teniente*, two feet above her range of vision. She had a candle-end in each hand, shedding warm drippings—if very little light—upon her billowy gauze costume.

After one look from the doorway, Mrs. Parksberry flew across the room, blew out the candles with two puffs, right and left; and then fell limply into the long Hongkong steamer chair under the window, and moaned:

"Aren't you warm enough, Lila Fern? Aren't you satisfied to slowly simmer to death, without starting a quick fire? The idea of taking such risks, you foolish child! With that fluffy thing, that takes fire from a warm look of admiration! And now all the effect of my drive is lost. I may as well not have gone! Dripping from head to foot—and I was so heavenly cool. I wish to mercy sakes I'd never told Percy Fern I'd look after you out here; I wish——"

"You don't mean that, you dear, cross old thing! You do love me a wee bit—say you do," coaxed the little figure, crouching down beside the other, and groping for her hand. There was no answer, and the hand was withheld. That moment of heat-recalling terror must be fully paid for.

"I was only trying to see if the shirring met right at the placket-hole."

Mrs. Parksberry showed no interest whatever in these intimate revelations.

"I'm so sorry you got all warm again; truly, I'm awfully sorry."

Her friend's wrath did not perceptibly cool.

"I know that you know everything—just everything—but, truly, Mrs. Parksberry, did you from the very beginning? When you first married the captain? This is my first cruise, you know."

The pathos of this appeal was apparently lost. Then Lila had a sudden inspiration. Leaning over, she groped about in the dark on the floor and found a huge bamboo fan. There was always a fan beside each chair, lying where it had fallen from flaccid fingers. Gently, patiently she waved it above her friend's head and waited.

For two whole minutes the silence continued; then the irate one began to

shake with laughter, and, putting out a hand, she caressed the little head beside her.

"Oh, Lila, you are such a fascinating little idiot!" and then the idiot, with a cry of delight, threw both arms about the other, and the two heads, one of silver and one of gold, came together, and peace was established.

"You see, Lila, you ought to dress by daylight for the evening, in the present condition of affairs—the way we all do—look!" She sprang up and off came the big flower hat; off the long white silk gloves; off the long black lace scarf, draped so studiously, and there stood the captain's wife, ready for the doctor's little dinner; her plump white shoulders and arms gleaming even in the half darkness.

Miss Fern was so impressed and so unusually expansive about it, that she was affectionately gathered up and taken to Mrs. Parksberry's comfortable room. Its vastness was divided into several rooms by great bamboo-slatted screens in their natural color; against which were arranged potted palms and gardenias, so effectively that poor little Lila felt, every time she saw the miracle of that room, more than ever helpless, less able to cope with the complicated exigencies of naval cruising. Mrs. Parksberry had achieved a sitting room, a bedroom, and a tiny corner called "the butler's pantry," where Ah Loo made tea at quarter to five o'clock and washed up the paraphernalia. At night all the screens were put away, and it became once more the chamber where sleep was pursued, if not always captured. Ah Loo brought rows of candles, standing firmly waxed to great sheets of cardboard, and placed them on the tables and wall brackets; and Miss Fern's toilet was soon an accomplished fact.

Whatever else was in that pale little flower-like head, the genius for dress was securely hers. A bright golden-colored Indian gauze, with a metallic glint to the yellow here and there; partly covered with a vague, formless tracery of warm browns. She had a spray of ylang-ylang blossoms, with the dull green leaves, on the low corsage, and

another in her pale hair. When the home-made candelabra first revealed the pretty vision, Mrs. Parksberry's delight found ardent expression.

Spying the young woman's yellow satin slippers, she sent Ah Loo for a *carromato*. After long waiting, it finally rattled up to the door with a serenely triumphant Chinese *amah* inside; and to make sure of flexible Malay promises, she kept her seat till her mistress appeared.

"Shall I take my pistol?" asked Lila, casually, as she drew out the enormous dungeon key from the dungeon lock, preparatory to locking the door.

"Your what? For goodness' sake, Lila, where did you get one?" cried the captain's wife, as amazed as if a humming bird had drawn one from beneath its wing.

"Percy bought one up from the ship—a huge thing, six barrels. It's the funniest thing—some days I remember what he said about loading it, and some days I forget! He told me never to go outside the hotel without it, unless there was a man with me," came sweetly from the little blonde.

"Well, you can choose right now between me and the pistol! You can't have both the same evening, Miss Fern! And would you mind telling me if there's insanity in Ensign Percy Fern's family on both sides? And also what you intend to do with that pistol in an emergency?" went on the sarcastic voice of her companion, as they sailed down the broad stairway, followed by suspicious glances from the great, slumbrous eyes of the Spanish women sitting about in the corridor, waiting to go in to dinner. They drew their own Latin inferences as to the free goings and comings of these American women, who obviously were without social laws, without etiquette, without morals; who drove brazenly on the Luneta with men not their husbands or brothers, and even then did not seem to lose caste! Ah, they were all of a kind, these conquerors of theirs who ate without wine! The men had no jealousy, the women no repose. They walked in the sun in the morning, and sat in the plaza after

nightfall. They did, and left undone, all the wrong things in one hopeless, discordant, inconceivable jumble—endlessly interesting to sit in the corridor, or on the Luneta, and watch and watch and whisper about.

Dr. Lucy's quarters, known popularly as "The Saint's Rest," consisted of four rooms at the end of the long barracks back of the captain of the port's office, redeemed from the desert by the young surgeon's energy, good taste, and knightly liking for paying court to the few countrywomen who had braved the rough life from the first, and about whom all this world of American men revolved in their few idle hours, with an innocence of heart beyond the Latin women's comprehension.

The two women stumbled up a dingy flight of dark stairs, worn into ancient ruts by Spanish feet.

"Torches and cymbals!" snorted Mrs. Parksberry, as she tripped on her dress and clutched wildly, at her companion. Miss Fern regretted having repeated the note to her, and felt, somehow, responsible.

Finally they stood at the top in the bare hall and faced three closed doors and a motionless *sudari*. Not a sound reached them. A jet-black cat dashed up the stairs between the two women, and disappeared through the beaded *sudari* with a little tinkling sound. Lila shuddered and clung to the captain's wife. They exchanged glances, and then their roving eyes sought inspiration in the huge scarlet and white sign directly opposite them:

#### THE SAINT'S REST.

In the Wide Waste There Still Is a Tree.

Three long, pink Chinese lanterns hung from the ceiling, swaying now and then as a slight puff of wind came in through the curtain's beaded strings.

"Hadn't we better go down and come up again more noisily?" whispered Lila.

"I shall not budge—the idea! I can't understand it; but I knew something would go wrong, just because I told you how nice he is. Let's give a cough, and then see!" The improvised duet pro-



duced no effect upon the obstinate silence.

"If I wasn't fairly starving——" began Mrs. Parksberry, and then her irritable eyes fell upon a Chinese gong hanging on the wall just at the head of the stairs, where they still stood; and, seizing the padded stick, she worked off her state of mind so effectually that Miss Fern's hands went to her ears. A Chinese head appeared at one door; another opened, and a shout issued forth through the crack; the blue beads of the *sudari* were dashed aside like water, and their young host plunged through, crying:

"*Ma belle mère!* Princess! Wilt thou—canst thou ever forgive me? One million pardons, ladies. I am desolated. I have no words. If my life would be any comfort to you, I beg you to take it! If——" he stood, his dark, curly head bowed low before them, one arm outstretched, the other spread upon the breast of his white duck uniform.

"If you'd only stop talking, I'd like to tell you what I think of you," cried Mrs. Parksberry, not to be so easily placated, her eyes smiling at him affectionately meanwhile.

"You were asleep, siree!"

"You stole up as silently as moon-beams."

"You forgot we were coming!"

"I have thought of nothing else, madam."

"I think, myself, we are very good to stay after such a—turgid welcome!"

"I do not dare tell you what I think!"

He held the blue strings back for Miss Fern, who passed through to the "Salon," as it was called; and as the gray head followed and passed under his arm, he whispered:

"I *was* asleep, *belle mère*, sitting waiting for you. I didn't get to bed at all last night."

"One of the men?"

"No, a Mestizo woman around the corner."

"Is she better? Can I——"

"You can't do anything, *chère maman*; neither could I." She sighed and passed on; the beads fell to with a rattle; and he went to Miss Fern.

"Would you like to go to my room and take off your—your furs?"

Miss Fern threw off the bit of gauze about her shoulders, and, making the excuse of helping her friend in the removal of hers, she managed to whisper indignantly:

"You haven't introduced us yet!"

"In a trench on the firing line we don't introduce, Mademoiselle Convenience! Ah, Lila, I fear you are impervious to the broadening influences of travel."

The army officer could not imagine what they were talking about, and was a little disappointed that they would not see how nicely he had arranged his bureau top for them—not forgetting either pins or hairpins, or a beautiful pink box of highly scented face powder; and his sister's picture well to the fore, so they would ask who she was. He was inordinately proud of her stately beauty and loved to talk about her.

Certainly Dr. Lucy, for a bird of passage, shared with Mrs. Parksberry the gift of nest-building. The whole front of the room was one broad window, wide open to the night, upon the sill of which he had arranged soft cushions for the inevitable elbows of loungers in search of a breath more air. The rude floor was covered with rugs of many sizes and colors, zigzagging in all directions. There were a few pieces of furniture, and all the rest was a chaotic and yet—in the dim yellow light shed by Chinese porcelain lanterns—a harmonious potpourri of American, Spanish and Filipino flags; Indian cotton draperies, crossed Moro spears, bolos, Malay creeses. His native patients in this wise settled their bills.

"And an upright piano! When and where did you get that? And tell us frankly, are you Aladdin in a new, freshly painted Yankee incarnation?" exclaimed Mrs. Parksberry, exploiting her favorite's achievements for Lila's benefit.

"In the bottom of my heart lay a hope you'd ask me to sing. I have the sweetest voice! And, Jupiter, how I love to hear myself doing it!" He opened the piano suggestively.

"That's right!" shouted a hearty voice from the next room, through a flimsy Armenian drapery, and in rushed Captain Ashmore, the doctor's messmate, buttoning his white blouse: "You are safe, ladies, have no fear, I am here!" The doctor got up from the piano stool hastily, and raised a fending elbow. The scale of this captain of artillery was so huge that he dwarfed all else within vision, and when he was presented to Lila and stood looking down at her, she suddenly became an infant in burlesque attire. He was commonly known as "The Cathedral."

"Miss Fern, will you do something for us?" asked the captain. "Come every night to dinner and wear that dress, and sit exactly where you are, under that lantern—please do! Doctor, did you ever see anything so satisfying in a disappointing world, as the way the light fastens on the glint of her hair, and picks out the gold thread in her gown, and——"

"If I had a wife, I'd like her to look exactly as you do to-night, Miss Fern," said the doctor, gravely.

"Good-by to my little Clarice's prospects! I see the end!" exclaimed Mrs. Parksberry, smiling upon her young friend's initiation into life among the advance guard of a young nation bent on planting a new flag on the very edge of the Old World, looking neither to the right nor left for either military or social precedent.

Lila gave a nervous little laugh, and then looked appealingly toward her companion, the frightened eyes black from dilated pupils, the whole expression showing the nervous tension of a timid nature striving to adjust itself to extraordinary conditions quite without precedent in her slight experience.

Then two other men strolled in. One, a syndicate correspondent, young, slight, with the face of a boy, but with eyes a century old. He made it a point to keep in the good graces of both the army and navy, as being in the direct professional line of news-gathering. The other man was a rather elderly volunteer lieutenant of infantry; once a page in the Senate, where he had not only saved

his fees, but accumulated enough political influence to last him the rest of his life. He was in social demand because he sang dialect songs of such length and with such rapidity that they made up in physiological interest whatever they lacked in art. He drank heavily at times in his leisure hours, but was always inspected by his friends about six o'clock, and, if presentable, was reminded of the evening's invitation; if not, he was locked up in an obscure corner of his barracks, and a sentry placed over him, with the privilege of smoking thrown in, to prevent tattling.

"All right, Ping Pong!" called out their host, as a Chinese face appeared through the *sudari* strings.

"Ladies, you are served. In the vulgar language of Ping Pong: 'S'loup l'eady.' Miss Fern, as the last arrival upon the station, will you honor me? Mrs. Parksberry, I'll leave you to be fought over, and claimed by the best man, as in the honest days of flint arrow-heads."

Ashmore swept the other two aspirants aside as a buffalo plows through bamboo saplings. The two remaining men linked arms and followed the others into dinner, consoling each other with words of burlesque endearment.

Mr. Irons, the correspondent, waived all privileges at the table, and seated himself quietly and quickly where he faced the broad, open window giving on the street in front of the barracks. He made it a habit to sit facing windows and doors. News always came through one or the other.

That the same Chinaman cooked, as well as served, the dainty little dinner placed before them, required the captain's solemn substantiation. In pale blue linen, the Oriental moved noiselessly about, enjoying even more than his master the weekly dinners given to the ladies at "The Saint's Rest."

First came iced mangoes, daintily served in their own half rind, with a drop of green Chartreuse for perfume, rather than taste; and Mrs. Parksberry's long moan of ecstasy after the first spoonful, made them all laugh, thereby deeply wounding the Chinese

artist's feelings, who heard and misunderstood in the usual Asiatic way. Turning her merry eyes upon the delighted host, she whispered across the table:

"Ah, dear doctor! If we had only met sooner, if you had hurried or I had waited! I would have shown you that there are still a few Enids left in the world; and, following you in the good, old whithersoever-way, crying aloud——"

"Unfortunately, Enid always went before, and was strictly forbidden to talk!" laughed Irons.

"These men of facts—conversational coroners!" scorned she, appealing to the others.

"Ting-a-ling, punkah, chop-chop," ordered Dr. Lucy; and the Chinaman, who answered to any, and all the names that pleased the fancy of his master, went behind Mrs. Parksberry, and in his spare moments—of which he seemed, somehow, to have many—he pulled rhythmically at the dingy strip of canvas; and the great punkah over the table clumsily flirled its bedraggled flounces back and forth with a loud creak, and relieved the night's still breathlessness.

The bouillon was cold, the deviled crabs very hot, likewise the curried mystery that followed later on. Even Miss Fern waxed enthusiastic, and used the perfervid language allowable in half-starved circles.

While the Chinese "boy" was serving the canned asparagus salad, Mr. Irons' wandering, weary eyes suddenly focused themselves upon the broad window facing him. He seemed to withdraw all of his senses from the scene about him, and to concentrate them upon the dark world without. Then he sought Dr. Lucy's eyes, but they were frankly worshipping Lila's ethereal beauty. Turning toward Ashmore, Irons found that giant's eyes tight shut in gigantesque laughter at some of Mrs. Parksberry's nonsense.

Irons ran his hand across his forehead, and broke into soliloquy: "I don't know *when* I've felt the heat as I do to-night, and I don't know *where* I've left my handkerchief, and I don't know *what* I'm going to do! Lucy, Ashmore,

some of you fellows, may I go to your rooms and borrow one?"

"Help yourself, help yourself!" cried Lucy, who had not heard anything but the interrogative, too intent upon his right-hand neighbor. Irons left the table and returned dabbing his forehead ostentatiously.

When he was reseated beside Lieutenant Capp, the volunteer officer, he noticed the latter's hand go out toward his many times replenished glass. Touching his arm, he whispered, without looking at him:

"I wouldn't, Mr. Capp; there's work ahead for all of us to-night."

"Think there's anything in that fool manifesto plastered all over town?" muttered the other.

Irons lowered his eyelids affirmatively. At that moment their host arose, glass in hand:

"Let us drink to the navy!"

"Ah-h," murmured Mrs. Parksberry, appreciatively, her glass suspended.

"Invincible upon the sea, invisible upon the land. May the 'Sunset Law' never be revoked by the admiral. May their wives by day be our sweethearts by night. May—what? Well, well, all right—my come chop-chop"—this last to the Chinese boy whispering in his ear. Broken-spirited in voice and manner, Dr. Lucy put down his glass and groaned:

"It's always been like that—always! Just when I'm on the up-grade with a full head of steam on, to a really great moment, a cow wanders lowing across my track! Ashmore, I detect your jealous hand in this. Ladies, will you pardon my leaving you for a moment? Even an army surgeon has his little troubles. Gentlemen, make the most of my absence."

Out in the hall he found a native in white shirt and trousers standing at the head of the stairs. His brown face was thin and his eyes as pathetic as a dog's.

"Somehow I thought it was you, Luis. What do you want? Be quick, please." The man looked about, listened over the balusters, and then, stepping close to the American, whispered rapidly in fair English:

"Comandante, you were good to my poor little Eufemia last night, before she went to the Holy Virgin—good, like she was yo' seester. I cannot forget, señor, and I cannot pay you other than thees way. I fear to be seen, or to be heard! Listen close: my people are ordered to burn the ceety to-night, and weel bolo yo' men and yo' weemen!" Lucy laughed.

"But eet ees true, señor doctor! Bueno, I have paid my account, *haga Vd. lo que quese!* I fear to be heard, or to be seen. *Buenas noches, señor.*"

"It's just a big bluff, Luis! We don't scare quite so easy as that. But thank you just the same. Good-night," called the doctor after the lithe little figure, which slipped as quietly as water down the stairs into the dark below.

Although his expression was one of serene amusement, Lucy went directly to his own room and changed his shoes, and stuck a pistol into his hip pocket. Opening the dining-room door, he shouted:

"Irons, one minute, please."

"Oh, let's all go!" growled Ashmore. "I say, this is carrying informality beyond the limit, even in war times. It's my belief, Capp, they're having something stronger out there, and I call it downright indecent!"

By that time there was not a man of the party, except Captain Ashmore, who did not know that the hour for festivities was at an end. Capp had tried several times, but failed signally, to convey the news to that lord of serenity.

The doctor brought back the correspondent's apologies to the table; something about headquarters and the censor office—but no one paid the slightest attention.

A faint glow, as if the sun had changed his mind and was returning betimes, began to fill the black square of the open window.

"You were telling us, *beau fils*, how the navy was doing all the work out here, while the army was doing all the playing," rallied Mrs. Parksberry, returning to the old laughing controversy which they all fell back upon, when facing conversational bankruptcy.

"Is the navy here? I hadn't heard," contributed Lieutenant Capp, as insolently as possible.

"You wouldn't be here, otherwise!" came suddenly from little Miss Fern, like a flash out of a sunny sky, and they all shouted, "Hear! hear!" and the men got up and insisted on clinking glasses with her. She tried to laugh, tried not to feel and look so desperately angry and in earnest; tried to take it all lightly as her friend did; but her heart-throbs shook her little body and her face was white.

"Give that child a month more, and I'll refuse to chaperon her!" exclaimed Mrs. Parksberry, unspeakably delighted. "I've reached the conclusion that blondes are the human metal at white heat—we brunettes, cold, dead iron."

The irrepressible host was on his feet again, his eyes upon Lila:

"The second toast of the evening—our Royal Infanta! And the last among us shall be first—'tis beauty calls and——"

"By Jove, fellows, look out of the window! There's a big fire somewhere!" cried Ashmore, springing to his feet and striding to the window. Dr. Lucy ground his teeth and raised despairing arms—but it was hopeless. Every face turned toward the flickering glow, and Miss Fern and Lieutenant Capp flew after the captain.

"Well, if it's the hotel, it's too late; and if it isn't the hotel, I'll have time to finish this heavenly salad—so, by your leave!" murmured the navy woman, who had grown gray in the service. Sitting coolly opposite her laughing host at the otherwise deserted table, Mrs. Parksberry finished the asparagus; the Chinese boy still jerking at the pun-kah behind her, bent upon doing his part well, even if fate had thrown him among a lot of American lunatics, more or less dangerous.

A sharp cry came from Lila, and she rushed back to the dinner table, her face like wax and her eyes wild with terror.

"The hotel's on fire! It's one great curtain of fire all back of the plaza! Oh, where shall we go? Oh, Mrs. Parksberry, come at once, perhaps we

can save some of our things! I don't know my way; please, please come at once!" She sped toward the stairs.

"Somebody stop her," whispered Mrs. Parksberry, sighing wearily, as she was at last compelled to put down her napkin and push back her chair.

"The Cathedral" blocked Miss Fern in the doorway. The men looked bored. Mrs. Parksberry arose at once.

"Is it the hotel?" she demanded.

"No, back of it, some blocks."

"All right, go your several ways, gentlemen, which are not women's ways to-night, I fancy, and good luck to you! Captain, may we have one of the men with us as far as the hotel door? Perhaps it would be better. Get our scarfs, please, Mr. Capp. Good-night, everybody." When she even stopped to speak a word of praise to the, at that moment, Chinese punkah-wallah, Miss Fern fairly jumped up and down in a pretty frenzy before the captain, who sought with awkward benignity to soothe her.

"I'll go with you, Mrs. Parksberry," said the doctor; "the men will be ordered out in a minute, if this amounts to anything, and then Ashmore and Capp will have to bolt. My work comes later—if at all—and it will not be with the battery, anyhow."

As the three stepped out into the night and turned toward the great spreading light which filled the heavens, an order rang out through the barracks, repeated again and again in varying keys. There was the sound of many running feet, shouts, an excited laugh, lights flashing all along the low barracks, and then down the stairs the young soldiers tumbled and lined up and grounded arms outside in the street.

"Our little hour is over, Lila. Just hurry with me out of the way, as bravely and quietly as you can. And whatever happens—don't scream! Men loathe a screaming woman. We're in the way now—we women. Let your pride keep you silent. Hold my hand tight and do whatever Dr. Lucy says."

"The men are coming, we can't make the bridge ahead of them, so we had best step aside, Mrs. Parksberry, and

give them the road. It's only two batteries, it will not take a minute."

The close files went by. The dull cadenced shuffle of many feet along the dusty road turned to a hollow thud on the wooden bridge, and then again died into the monotonous scrape, as they took the street that leads to Tondo. Young faces were there, worn thin by the heat, and white with excitement; with solemn eyes full of big, clean thoughts, that lent dignity to the meanest among them. Mrs. Parksberry caught her breath and whispered to the doctor, on her right:

"Somebody loves each one—some woman—somewhere!"

He patted her hand on his arm in silence. Lila's face was hidden against her friend's shoulder, as she stumbled on beside her, her pretty dress trailing in the dust unheeded.

As they neared the plaza a shot rang out; the surgeon's right hand went to his hip pocket.

"Double quick, please, ladies," he laughed; and they bolted with lowered heads across the plaza to the hotel. Just as they reached it, a hoarse voice roared an order in Spanish from the entresol, and half a dozen native "boys" flew to the great door and closed it with a loud clang and rattle of huge iron bolts.

After a moment's hammering and loud-voiced parley, the small wicket door grudgingly offered them entrance, and Mrs. Parksberry plunged headlong within. Dr. Lucy detained Lila just long enough to touch her hand and whisper: "You understand that I have to leave you, don't you?" and then the little door swallowed her, and he flew back to the office of the captain of the port, from whom he took his orders.

Mrs. Parksberry gathered herself together, laughing excitedly, then she smoothed down her own plumage and Lila's, vividly aware of the Spanish eyes watching for them up in the corridor.

"My dear child, where's your other slipper?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know where anything is," gasped Lila. Mrs. Parksberry arranged her own trailing robes to hide Lila's deficiency of foot

covering from the waiting eyes above, and then dragged her limp charge bodily up the two long flights, and deposited her outside of their adjoining rooms. Then she sailed down the dimly lighted corridor in search of Ah Loo and general information.

From the *amah's* window, at the back of the hotel, she looked out upon a great sea of fire on two sides, several squares away. The manifesto was not a bluff—Luis was right.

Above the roar of the flames, now and then, came a high nasal, far-reaching order, followed by a volley of shots. Then a desultory report of a musket here and there, screams from native women, followed by a strange, dull popping sound, difficult for uninitiated ears to place; then once more the crackle and roar of the spreading fire.

To Mrs. Parksberry came the vision of a gray-haired officer in white standing on the bridge of his ship, 'way down the bay, staring out over the waters at the burning city, in an agony of helpless suspense. And she knew if she survived that night, her days in Manila were numbered.

Just how that night of the little dinner at "The Saint's Rest" would end for them all was not at all easy to predict.

She went rapidly from room to room of the other American women in the hotel, and found the doors locked, the occupants gone. Ah Loo's excited explanation suggested the Rape of the Sabines, and until her mistress discovered that the armed marauders were neither the livid gray of the Spanish soldiers nor the white of the Filipino, but the honest *khaki* of the Anglo-Saxon, she knew no peace.

A little later she found Lila cowering just inside of her own door, her pallid face and yellow hair almost phosphorescent in the half light.

"There's been awful fighting at the other end of the plaza!" she whispered.

"Bamboo burning, Lila—when dry it snaps like a pistol."

"Oh, and the terrible groans and dying gasps out there below the window!"

"Carabao in the wallow, dear."

"They'll never take me alive! 'There are six bullets in the pistol, five for others and the sixth for yourself, if the worst comes'—that's exactly what Percy said, and I'll do just what he told me," Lila repeated, with soft determination.

"He's the youngest thing in the navy, that brother of yours! He'd be a protection to us to-night, for he wouldn't burn!" stormed the other. A little later she addressed her *amah*:

"Ah Loo, there is an unusually long and attractive list of deaths to choose from to-night—you can go to the street and there's one kind—much to recommend it! You stay here, and there's another. There's a certain refinement about incineration—it's neat and complete. Let's stay here! In the meanwhile, pack this hand bag, in case we have to run; this dress-suit case, in case we have time to walk out; and both trunks, in case our exit is to be made with dignity."

The *amah* understood only the three gestures and the active verb, but it was enough, and she grunted her approval as she went to work. Meanwhile, Mrs. Parksberry changed her dinner dress; and then went once more to the corridor, where the Spanish women watched from the shadows.

Miss Fern's door was closed. She went to it and knocked. There was no response. She rattled the handle, knocked again, waited and listened. Shouts came up from the plaza, and several shots in quick succession. Mrs. Parksberry's ear was against Lila's door, and she heard a voice, scarcely recognizable, high and strident, cry out from within: "I'll shoot if you touch my door again! Go away, go away, I say!"

Mrs. Parksberry's hand fell and she sat down bewildered, carefully getting out of Lila's range of fire, entirely convinced that the overwrought girl would be as good as her word, and would probably have as true an aim as seems bestowed upon the irresponsible.

"The old one remains alone. I wonder why! Perhaps she's a little worse than the others," whispered the Spanish women. It was no affair of theirs—this



hornet's nest. Patience and silence! Spain would soon send for them!

The soothing sense of duty mapped out quieted Mrs. Parksberry's nerves, and she settled down on guard between her own door and Lila's. Ah Loo brought bulletins from the conflagration. Again and again the flames approached, receded, and died away for lack of material. The night wore on. Ah Loo reported a patter of spent bullets against Mrs. Parksberry's shutters. The repeated horrors became mere commonplaces, both mistress and maid refused to respond emotionally to anything more. The mistress was bored and cross, and the maid cross and sleepy, and Mrs. Parksberry ordered her to go to sleep anywhere within call.

The Spaniards went to their rooms. With her eyes and ears clinging desperately to Lila's door, Mrs. Parksberry's watch went on, lest murder should be done. Finally her sense of responsibility faded away with sight and hearing; her eyelids drooped, the gray head fell back against the window sill of the inside glass court. Out in the night the elements and several nations fought on together for the possession of the city.

The sun rose upon miles of charred foundation walls, still smoking; upon long trenches dug and filled and covered up by silent Chinese; while the weary, begrimed young soldiers tramped back to barracks.

The bugle at sunrise was as cheerfully impudent as ever.

"By the Tropic of Cancer! what are you doing here?" cried a voice that seemed to come from a long distance to Mrs. Parksberry's drugged hearing. It was his touch on her arm that aroused her, and she started up at first in fear, and then laughed in hysterical relief at sight of the familiar face. Then she turned away her head to hide the tears.

"It's twenty years since I've seen the face of a friend!" she explained.

"Poor little *belle mère*! Why didn't you go with the others out to the transport?"

"They had gone."

"Well, why didn't you trust us and go to bed like a sensible woman? You

ought to have known the way it would end. What are we here for?"

She told something of the story of the night. At first he laughed, then, after eying Miss Fern's door for an instant, his laugh died away suddenly.

In all the uproar and wild chaos of that night, what might not have happened in that silent room? He sprang toward the door, but Mrs. Parksberry dragged him away.

"Doctor, if you don't want me to go stark, staring mad on your hands, keep away! I've stayed here all night just to prevent such a thing, and I don't propose having my vigil wasted!"

"May I go to your room?" he demanded, his face very grave. They went together.

"Will you indorse what I do for the next three minutes, Mrs. Parksberry? I hate to do it, but somebody's got to get into that room, and attend to that poor child. I think by using your open shutter and her closed shutter, I can creep along the sill, and at least see what's the matter." He threw down his cap and took off his blouse, and mounted to the window ledge, and silently crept along, clinging to the great green shutter running in a side groove, moving it slightly as he moved.

When the young surgeon leaned very far over, and with one hand grasped the slats of Miss Fern's shutter, Mrs. Parksberry shut her eyes and held her breath. Pulling the shutter slowly toward him, he refastened his grip and took the leap lightly across; steadying himself, he cautiously approached his head to the opening between the two shutters. One glance and he plunged headlong in; his cry and a shot rang out together—then absolute silence.

"Doctor! Lila!" called Mrs. Parksberry, frantically, again and again, leaning close to the roughly finished partition between the rooms at the outer wall.

"Why don't you speak? What has happened? Oh, speak to me, one of you!" Suddenly she turned and gave an order in impassioned pidgin to Ah Loo, whose earrings jingled as she ran out of the room.

The silence continued in that chamber of mysteries. Had the pistol been fired before, during that long, turbulent night? Was that Lila's first shot? Or the *sixth*? Was it aimed at that white figure creeping in upon her through the window? Or was it turned upon herself? And had the aim been true in either case?

The suspense was not to be borne! She flew to the corridor.

"Doctor, are you hurt? Answer me! Lila, Lila, listen! Unlock the door, dear—we're all friends—the trouble is over!" she was kneeling on the floor calling through the keyhole.

A Spanish head appeared across the corridor through a partly opened door. The man looked about, stared a moment at Mrs. Parksberry, and then withdrew. The good God alone knew what it was all about! One may as well sleep. It was only an affair *Americano*.

Then the captain's wife went to pieces and sobbed aloud, kneeling and clinging to the great doorknob, her head bent upon her hands. Suddenly she caught her breath and started erect and staring, as she felt the knob slowly turning in her hands! She drew back with fascinated eyes.

The door opened very slowly and noiselessly, and the doctor's pale face appeared, smiling, and with his finger on his lips. He crept out and closed the door gently.

"It's all right—she's asleep!" he whispered. "Put your *amahi* on watch by her door, and come to your room."

Then Mrs. Parksberry laughed and cried, and scolded and laughed again. He brought her a glass of water, and stood fanning her till it was over.

"Was it the sixth shot?" she finally gasped.

"Yes."

"Where did it go?"

"Under my arm."

"Good!"

"Well, I like that!"

"Oh, but don't you see that that shows two things: Percy Fern underestimated her spirit; and we, her aim—bless her heart! And you're all right, anyhow."

"She was sitting in a chair in the middle of the room, when I peered in, dressed just as she was, in her yellow gown; the flowers still in her hair; the pistol in her right hand, lying on her lap. Her poor little face was gray and pinched, her eyes jet black and staring. She had probably been there all night, watching between the door and window. Well, it's all right now. I think she knew me just as she fainted. I had a time getting her out of it. I thought she never would come round."

"But why didn't you answer me? I was perfectly wild! You must have known—you must have heard me!" fumed Mrs. Parksberry.

"When I'm interested in a case, *belle mère*, I don't see or hear anything else about me. Did you speak?"

"Did I speak?" she moaned.

"I finally found a flask of brandy, and her consciousness fluttered back; she looked at me and smiled, and then fell suddenly into the deepest sleep. I didn't like the looks of it somehow, so I aroused her and made her look at me and speak to me, and take some more brandy and water. Then I made her as comfortable as I could, and she again fell instantly asleep. It's just a case of reaction and honest youthful exhaustion. But she must not be aroused by anyone but me. Later on, I'll come back, and you and Ah Loo must take off that dress and make the poor little girl more comfortable. I'll run right over after tiffin. But, Mrs. Parksberry, she mustn't stay here after this. Another shock might send her clean off her head. And there'll be lots of them before we are through out here. Japan's the place for her. I'll go down to the fleet this afternoon and see Fern and bring him up, if he can get away. There's a transport going over to Nagasaki day after to-morrow. I'll arrange it for her, but she oughtn't to go off alone; she'll not be quite herself for a week or two, I'm afraid. I wish—*belle mère*, why can't a fellow's duty and a fellow's pleasure ever have the same address?"

"Oh, you needn't worry, doctor; she'll have the very best of company!"

As soon as Tom Parksberry comes up on the eleven o'clock boat, I'll get my orders detaching me from the Asiatic squadron. Katharine Parksberry, at your service, will take your murderous patient over to Japan! I can hear Tom's growl now, if I listen. He'll come up the bay like a typhoon—poor fellow! I can imagine the night he's had! Well, I'm all packed. But you're not listening to one word I'm saying!"

With introverted eyes he was only too obviously following a thought of his own. Presently he leaned toward her, his elbows on his knees, and fingered the fan in her hands. "*Belle mère!*" he coaxed.

"I know exactly what you're going to say," she cried, "but I'll not help you by a syllable."

"*Chère maman!*"

"Oh, yes, a pretty how de do! You're a rascal, and we both know it. My poor little Clarice!"

"Then you have guessed!"

"Guessed? I *knew* it last evening!"

"I'm awfully afraid I—I can't wait for her," and he actually blushed under her distilling glance.

"Well, as she's barely fourteen, and never laid eyes upon you, and has my constitution, there's a possibility that she may survive!"

They were both laughing now.

"But I can't lose you, you know, Mrs. Parksberry. I need your help, awfully—more than ever. You'll help me, won't you?"

"Are you by any chance in earnest, Dr. Lucy?" His eyes met hers with a certain grave dignity she had seen once or twice before when a big thing like death had come among them, and silenced a familiar voice.

"I knew it the instant I saw her last evening standing like a little yellow bird beside you at the head of the stairs in my quarters. I knew it all night long as I worked over the poor fellows brought to me; some beyond my help forever, some in need of it, now and then one with nothing the matter but hysterics like a schoolgirl—all the dark night long she has been with me like golden sunlight. And I knew it just

now as I sat beside her, watching her sink to sleep in there, and wished (man-fashion) that I'd been a better one. I knew that she was to be my wife some day. Oh, she will! You may laugh and call it egregious conceit, but, thank goodness, it's not a fellow's merits that count in a thing like this. It's his will—yes, of course, hers too—and that's where you are going to help me."

"Well!" she exclaimed, "this is not the first example I've observed of the astonishing rapidity with which emotions come into full bloom on the equator, but it's, by long odds, the quickest! Somehow the heat frizzles up everything but our sensibilities, and they catch on to every blessed psychic what-do-you-call-it that's in the air!"

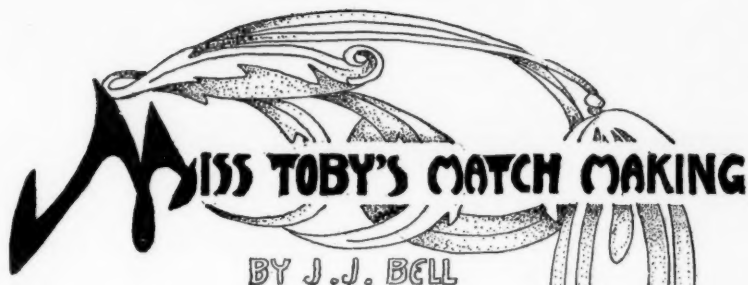
"Well, unless the psychic wires are crossed, that beautiful (gods! isn't she lovely?), dainty, gentle, flower-like—plucky? Yes, by Jove!—plucky little girl sleeping in there is going to be mine, *belle mère*, mine!" He stood up and defied her ridicule.

"Don't you dare to *belle mère* me any more, sir; I will not stand it!"

"You'll remain my ideal mother-in-law just the same, you can't stop that—even if your Clarice does marry a better man. And you're going to help me with *her*, when I get my leave and run over to Japan and join you? Oh, yes, you are! And we'll finish that little dinner that left off last night so abruptly. We'll have it over there together, we three, at a tea house I know on the hills above Kyoto."

"Ah-h!" exploded she, yielding every point with youthful enthusiasm. As they laughed, the great bell of Santa Rosario clanged out the first deafening call to arms for the daily combat at reveillé with that impertinent little bugle down in the quartel.

As Dr. Lucy crossed the plaza he stepped upon something that felt unusual beneath his foot, and, stooping, he picked up a tiny, dusty, yellow satin slipper; and remembering where he had seen its mate, he slowly walked on, smiling, as he brushed it very gently with his handkerchief, and then buttoned it within the breast of his blouse.



# MISS TOBY'S MATCH MAKING

BY J. J. BELL



"H! this is perfectly delightful!" sighed Miss Annabella Tobey, as she stepped from the French window of her little drawing room into the sunlit garden. "Perfectly delightful," she repeated, inhaling long breaths of the sweet, pure air, and gazing about her at the tender green and the flowers of her first Maytime in the country. "I'm so glad I decided to come here, and what a change it will be after all those years of school work!"

Miss Tobey was thirty-three and an orphan. For fifteen years she had conducted the infant department of a seminary in a large manufacturing town; and she would still have been conducting the same had it not been for an aunt who, seemingly realizing at the last moment her inability to convey five thousand odd pounds with her to paradise, left the amount to her niece, to whom she had never previously vouchsafed so much as a kindly word.

On recovering from the shock occasioned by her sudden and totally unexpected good fortune, and from the grief with which her simple, gentle heart insisted on tormenting itself, Miss Tobey took leave of the infant department, not without tears, and set about looking for a cottage in the country—a cottage with a garden wherein she would endeavor to train less aggravating things than young ideas how to shoot, grow and blossom in beauty. For, during all the years of her cramped, penurious existence, she had craved for the open air

and flowers, and her craving came out with a little rush shortly after she heard of her aunt's death and legacy. She went into the mourning warehouse with her hands full of daffodils.

And now she was settled in Hazelbank, Windy Lane, Deerdale—where there was never a hazel, where the wind was checked by high, sturdy hedges, and where no deer had ever been seen even by the oldest inhabitant. But Miss Tobey thought them all lovely names, and so suggestive of peace and freedom. She and the small maid whom she had engaged in the village had completed the indoor arrangements only the previous night, and this morning was the first opportunity Miss Tobey had found for making a leisurely inspection of her garden.

Certainly the previous tenant had left the garden in good order, though several plots awaited their summer occupants. As she strolled along the walk Miss Tobey decided in her mind how she would distribute the seeds and roots which she was expecting that day from a firm of nurserymen. She looked forward to planting them with the most intense eagerness and pleasure, for, while her practical experience in gardening had never gone beyond a few pots and a narrow window box, her mind was stored with lore from a bulky book on the subject, which she had carefully, if pathetically, studied long ere there was any hope of a country breeze stirring its pages.

Beside a blank bed at the end of a path Miss Tobey halted. "Here I'll plant blue pansies," she thought, ecstatically. "How lovely! Nothing but blue pansies!" she said, aloud, carried away by her delight at the prospect.

"Great mistake," said a voice, not far from her.

Miss Tobey paled and then flushed deeply on beholding the head and shoulders of a man above the hedge.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" said Miss Tobey, indignantly.

"Granted—granted," said the man, pleasantly but jerkily, raising his hat. "I mean, I beg yours—I shouldn't have spoken, but couldn't help it."

The lady turned away.

"Don't go," said the man. "Beg pardon again. Great mistake to plant pansies there—seeds there already."

"I thank you, sir," said Miss Tobey, stopping and inclining her head somewhat stiffly. "Good-morning."

"One moment. We're neighbors—my name's Bowling—John Bowling. You are Miss Tobey?" He lifted his hat a second time. "Hope you don't mind my being a neighbor, Miss Tobey?"

Miss Tobey did not exactly know what to do or say in the circumstances. After a brief hesitation, she bowed once more, but not quite so stiffly as previously, and glanced at her neighbor with a faint, dignified smile on her lips. He certainly did not look a rude man. His face was healthily tanned and shaven, save for a short, bristly mustache. His age would be about forty-five. He was pleasant-looking rather than good-looking; but his gray eyes, which seemed to twinkle behind gold-rimmed glasses, were decidedly attractive. The lady caught sight of them, and her annoyance almost vanished.

"Beg pardon again, Miss Tobey," he said, smiling at her.

"I—I really ought to thank you, Mr. Bowling," she said. "I should have felt so foolish afterward if I had planted pansies among the seeds."

"So you would—so you would," he returned, cheerfully. "I mean—a—how do you think you're going to like this place, Miss Tobey?"

"Oh, I'm sure I shall like it. Of course, it's all very new to me at present."

"Know anybody in Deerdale?"

"Nobody."

"Ah! I hope you won't find it too quiet."

"I don't think so." Miss Tobey thought she ought to be departing, and—

"Hope you'll forgive my looking over just now. This is my favorite corner of my garden, where I'm standing, and the hedge isn't high enough. Last summer I couldn't come here, as a young couple were in your house. Horrid, I assure you!"

Miss Tobey smiled.

"If I look over now and then you'll forgive me?" he went on. "Thank you. I won't do it oftener than I can help. Well, good-morning, Miss Tobey, and good luck to your garden."

He raised his hat, and Miss Tobey betook herself to another part of her domain. She wondered if she had done wisely in making the acquaintance of a man of whom she knew nothing in such a casual fashion. Her experience in the ways of the other sex was extremely limited, and she had never met a man quite like Mr. Bowling, whose manners were easy without being impertinent, and who was prosperous—she had seen his handsome house and fine garden from the road—without being proud. "He has such good eyes that I'm sure he must be a good man," thought Miss Tobey, at last, and with that thought she reassured herself.

Some days later her acquaintance with her neighbor was developed further. She had been working hard for several hours at her plots, and was well-nigh overcome with the fatigue of her unaccustomed labor, from which she was thinking of desisting, when Mr. Bowling greeted her over the hedge in friendly and cheerful fashion.

Miss Tobey could not suppress a gasp as she straightened her aching back to return his salutation.

"Enjoying yourself?" inquired Mr. Bowling, who could not help noticing the increased brightness of her eyes and

the freshness of her complexion. "She has grown ten years younger in a few days!" was his inward comment.

"Oh, yes. I'm enjoying myself," she panted. "I never had such a good time before."

"Mustn't overdo it, though," he returned. "I'm afraid you'll suffer for your enthusiasm."

"Oh, no!" protested Miss Tobey.

Mr. Bowling shook his head sagely. "You should stop now, or you'll feel sore and creaky to-morrow. I know the creaky feeling."

"He talks as if I were ancient," she thought, the least bit annoyed.

"Take my advice, and don't do any more to-day," he went on, "or, at any rate, take a rest and a cup of tea."

Miss Tobey wavered at the latter suggestion, hot and thirsty as she was. But a moment later she was once more bending over the bed, determined not to give in. Besides, what business had the man to advise her?

"I'm really not the least tired," she said, rather coldly.

Mr. Bowling's eyes twinkled. "Perhaps you want to finish the plot this afternoon, Miss Tobey."

"I intend to do so," she replied, bravely chopping at the caked soil, though her wrist pained her and her fingers could scarcely grip the trowel.

Her neighbor watched her for a couple of minutes. "Let me help you," he said, suddenly.

Miss Tobey flushed, but did not answer.

"Let me come round and bring my trowel with me," he said, unabashed.

Miss Tobey did not know how to reply. "It's very kind of you, I'm sure," she stammered, at last, "but—but you must not trouble. I can manage nicely, Mr. Bowling, thank you."

"No; you can't," he said. "I'll be round in a jiffy."

"No, no!" cried she, but he had disappeared. "Oh, goodness me! What-ever will the people think?" she sighed. "I really must—must—er—snub him. He is much too forward—at least, he's terribly masterful. But I suppose he means to be kind." She paused in her

work, struck by another disquieting idea. "I'm sure I don't know what Beatrice will say when she comes and finds me on such friendly—seemingly friendly—terms with a—strange man. I'd better tell him I have a friend coming to-morrow, and perhaps he'll understand that I don't wish him to speak over the hedge and—and so on. But Beatrice is so very attractive that perhaps—"

Her reflections were interrupted by the sound of the garden gate being opened, and she resumed her work with frantic energy.

He came up the walk behind her, and she heard a slight clatter.

"I found tea was ready," he said, pleasantly, setting a tray on a convenient garden seat, "so I just brought it along with me."

"Oh, you shouldn't!" she murmured, uncomfortably, wondering if any person had seen him entering her garden.

"Perhaps you don't care for tea," he said, in a disappointed voice.

"Oh, yes, I do. It was very good of you, but—but you shouldn't have troubled," she returned, lamely. What could she say? she asked herself.

"That's all right," he said, brightening. "Will you pour out, Miss Tobey? We can sit with the tray between us, can't we?"

Miss Tobey laid down her trowel, rose and took her seat without a word. She felt as if she were bound to do anything this man asked her.

"Two lumps and a very little cream," remarked Mr. Bowling, noticing, perhaps, that she was not quite at her ease. Then he began to talk, jerkily at first, but presently fluently and entertainingly, telling her of the district and its people, of the persons with whom she was likely to come in contact, and of many local matters upon which she was naturally desirous of being informed.

Miss Tobey gradually lost her awkward feelings; she smiled without the slightest sensation of guilt; she found her second cup of tea and her third dainty cake "simply delicious"; and at last she began to take part in the conversation easily and brightly.



"Now," said Mr. Bowling, an hour later, "if I may, I'll have a pipe and finish the plot. No, you mustn't attempt any more, Miss Tobey. Your hand will get blistered, and then you won't be able to do anything for a week. Tell me some more of your school experiences. I like hearing about youngsters."

He set to work, puffing comfortably, listening to Miss Tobey's reminiscences, and occasionally throwing in a question or an observation.

As he prepared to depart Miss Tobey remembered to inform him of the coming of her visitor the following day, but there was nothing of her recently premeditated hint in her remark.

"Miss Norman," he repeated. "Surely I've met a Miss Norman."

"Miss Beatrice Norman," said Miss Tobey. "She writes books. Her last was very successful."

"Of course, of course. Yes, I have met her in town."

"If you had met her once, I'm sure you would not forget her, Mr. Bowling," said Miss Tobey, with enthusiasm. "She is so lovely."

"Yes, she is lovely, and her work is admirable. Is she an old friend of yours, Miss Tobey?"

"We have been friends for a long time. She and I used to live together before she went to London. Of course, she is much younger than I."

"I dare say she won't remember me—we met at some dinner party, I think—but I should like to see her again. Won't you bring her to tea in my garden some day?"

Miss Tobey murmured a polite reply, and presently her neighbor left, carrying his tea tray and trowel.

"I'm afraid I've been foolish," sighed Miss Tobey to herself as she made for the cottage, "but I don't know when I've enjoyed myself so much. I don't think any one could help liking Mr. Bowling. I wonder what he does. He seems to have plenty of leisure. I expect Beatrice and he will like one another. Strange that they should have met before. Heigh-ho! I'm afraid he was right, and I'll be creaky to-morrow.

I wonder what Beatrice will think of him."

She learned Beatrice's opinion within the next few days.

"Why," exclaimed the younger woman, "you ought to feel proud, Anna, to be living next door to such a man."

"I—I felt so awkward, not knowing he was the great novelist," said Miss Tobey, "and I don't suppose I'd have known yet if it hadn't been for you, Beatrice. He just struck me as being a very kind man."

"So he is," said Beatrice, warmly. "Do you know how I happened to meet him, Anna?"

"At a dinner party, wasn't it?"

"Was that all he told you?"

"Yes; he merely said he thought he had met you there."

"He didn't say anything about a fallen lamp, and my skirts in flames, did he?"

"Oh, no."

"He didn't mention the fact that he saved me, and burned himself horribly?"

Miss Tobey gasped. "Did he do that? Oh, how splendid!"

"Yes, it was splendid," said Miss Norman, softly. "He was a man when all the other males were like children. And he merely told you he thought he had met me at a dinner party!"

"Have you seen him since?" asked Miss Tobey, breaking a silence.

"Not till I came here. He called to inquire for me the day after the blaze—I ought to have called for him, for his hands were terrible—but I was out. Of course, I wrote to him."

"Didn't he reply?"

"How could he, Anna? Think of his poor hands."

Miss Tobey shuddered. "Of course, it was a stupid question. But it—it's nice you should meet him again, through poor me, isn't it?" she said, lightly.

"I'm very, very much indebted to you, dear," Beatrice replied, warmly. She turned away—it might have been to hide the flush on her cheeks, but her friend saw it and wondered.

Miss Tobey sat at her bedroom window that night until an unusually late

hour, and when she did rise to prepare for rest she remarked to herself rather unkindly: "Annabella Tobey, you're an old goose!"

But she dreamed sweetly all the same.

Ere a week had passed it was evident that John Bowling and Beatrice Norman had taken a decided interest in each other. They met frequently; and in Miss Tobey's garden they would pace the paths deep in conversation while the hostess busied herself among her flowers; or in the adjoining garden and hot-houses they would find themselves alone together, while Miss Tobey appeared to be lost in admiration of her neighbor's beautiful possessions. In the evenings, too, they met in one or other of the dwellings, and on these occasions Miss Tobey always seemed to be working for dear life with needle and thread, so that the conversation on her part was of the slightest, though invariably it was cheerful.

It was not that they neglected her; it was only that she had made up her mind not to be in the way.

"I'm afraid, Anna," said Miss Norman on one occasion—"I'm afraid you don't like Mr. Bowling coming here."

"Nonsense, dear!" was the ready reply. "But I've really nothing to say to him. My books aren't his books, you know. How is the great play getting on?"

Miss Tobey had been led to understand that the chief theme of discussion between her friend and Mr. Bowling was the scheme of a new play, which might some day see the light with the twin as collaborators. "Of course, they can't be always talking about the play," she sometimes thought, smiling rather sadly.

"The play? Oh, it's getting on first rate," Miss Norman replied. "Only, I'm afraid Mr. Bowling and I shall quarrel over it before long. He's a dreadful man for having his own way. No doubt he's like that because he's unmarried. I wonder if he will ever marry," she added, looking thoughtfully downward.

"Oh, I'm sure he will," murmured Miss Tobey, in a tone of gentle encouragement.

"I hope he will," said her friend, without raising her eyes.

There was a long pause, broken by Beatrice.

"Anna."

"Yes, dear?"

"Anna," said the younger woman, with nervous hesitation, "I—I wish you would be k—kinder to Mr. Bowling, for—for my sake."

Miss Tobey trembled. Then she looked at the pretty, bowed head, the half hidden face, and the tightly linked fingers.

Miss Norman's shoulders heaved slightly.

"I will, I will!" cried Miss Tobey, very near to tears. "For your sake I will!"

Whereupon, with a choking sound, Beatrice fled to her bedroom.

Miss Tobey kept her word. During the next few weeks she was more than kind to her neighbor—she was charming. "Why should I make it uncomfortable for either of them?" she said in secret to herself. "I'll be nice to him and he'll be nice to me, for Beatrice's sake, and we'll all be happy in the end." In support of which prophecy she dabbed her eyes.

And Mr. Bowling was nice to her. She had a good deal of his company then, for Miss Norman had certain literary commissions to complete within the month, and was frequently engaged indoors, even at hours when she knew Mr. Bowling was likely to call. Miss Tobey gently mentioned her fears on one occasion.

"Don't you think it's too bad of you, Beatrice, dear, to let him come when you know you'll be busy?"

Miss Norman blushed. "My dear Anna, if I'm worth seeing, I'm worth waiting for—am I not?"

"Oh, certainly, dear. You are wiser than I," said Miss Tobey, dropping the subject. "I'm afraid I'm a very poor matchmaker," she thought, with a sigh. "Oh, dear! I wish they were married, or at least engaged."

.....  
Six weeks had slipped away, and the

last evening of Miss Norman's stay at Hazelbank had come.

Miss Tobey was in a state of miserable excitement, mingled with triumph. Mr. Bowling was coming to supper, and the spinster, as she regarded the prettily laid table, wondered if he or Beatrice would be able to enjoy any of the dainty dishes prepared for them. She feared—nay, she hoped they would enjoy something sweeter, if less satisfying.

With a final glance at the table, she left the room and went upstairs to find her friend, who was busy packing.

"Beatrice!" she exclaimed, reproachfully. "You don't mean to say you're packing up that lovely blouse!"

"Why not, Anna?"

"He—he admires it so much," stammered Miss Tobey.

Miss Norman almost buried her head in her box. "Do you think he'll—er—propose to-night?" she asked, in a muffled voice.

The other was somewhat shocked at the baldness of the question, but she replied kindly: "I'm sure he will, dear; I'm sure he will. I thought he looked so—so strange when I asked him this morning to supper to-night. And he said something about it being the last time. Are you—a—very fond of him, dear?" she inquired, shyly.

"Oh, don't ask me, Anna," replied the muffled voice. "Leave me for a little—I'm rather upset. I'll meet you in the garden presently."

Miss Tobey bent down and kissed the back of her friend's pretty head, after which she discreetly withdrew, only whispering from the doorway: "Don't be long. He'll soon be here, and you—you mustn't keep him waiting to-night, dear Beatrice."

It was an exquisite evening, and as Miss Tobey strolled along the garden path she told herself she ought to be

glad and thankful, and not silly and sad. "I'm a goose—an old goose to feel like this," she assured herself. "But I'll be all right to-morrow, when it's all over. And I haven't been such a poor match-maker after all!"

"Evening, Miss Tobey," said the familiar voice over the hedge.

"Oh, goodness!—I mean, good-evening, Mr. Bowling."

"I'm just killing time till the village clock tells me to come next door," he said. "Where is Miss Norman?"

"She's just finishing packing. She won't be long," said Miss Tobey, eagerly. "I'm so sorry she must go to-morrow."

"H'm!" muttered Mr. Bowling.

"Poor man," thought the lady. "He must be feeling sadly nervous."

"Think she'll be five minutes yet at her packing?" he inquired, abruptly.

"Not more than ten, I'm sure," she returned, encouragingly.

"Then I want to tell you something—ask you something," he said, quickly.

"Yes, Mr. Bowling," she whispered, kindly, drawing near to the hedge, impelled by the appeal of his face.

He drew a long breath. "Is there any hope for me?" he said, unsteadily.

"Oh, yes, yes, yes!"

"Oh, Annabella!"

Miss Tobey positively jumped.

"You'll marry me?" he stammered.

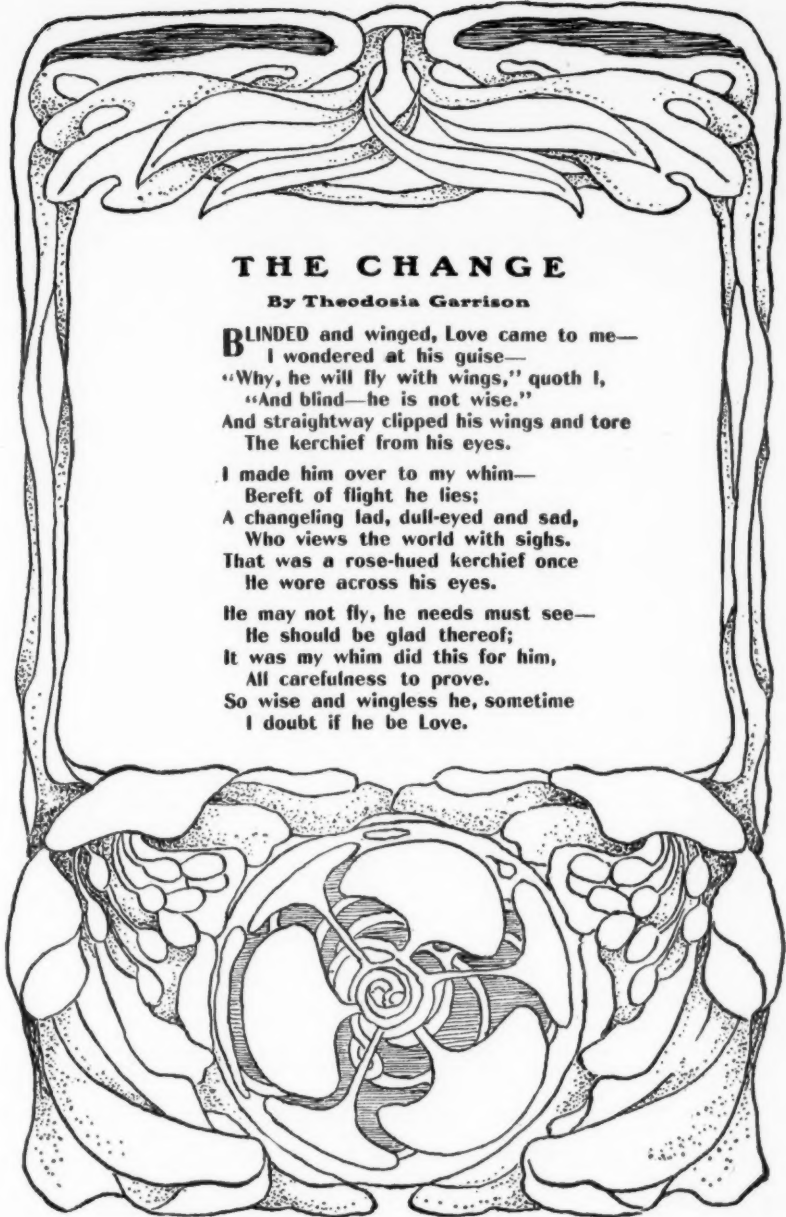
"What?" She felt like fainting.

"Wait!" he whispered. "I'll be round in a jiffy."

When at last they realized that it was time to think of seeking the cottage, they beheld Beatrice coming toward them. She was making quite an unnecessary noise on the gravel.

Miss Tobey's heart sank. Poor, darling Beatrice! And poor, darling Beatrice could not speak—for laughing.





## THE CHANGE

By Theodosia Garrison

**B**LINDED and winged, Love came to me—  
I wondered at his guise—  
“Why, he will fly with wings,” quoth I,  
“And blind—he is not wise.”  
And straightway clipped his wings and tore  
The kerchief from his eyes.

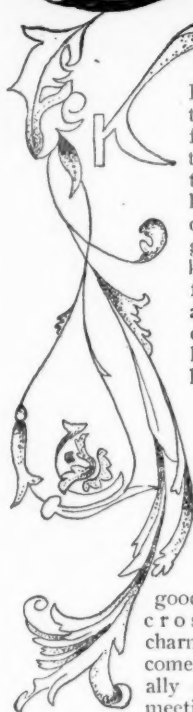
I made him over to my whim—  
Bereft of flight he lies;  
A changeling lad, dull-eyed and sad,  
Who views the world with sighs.  
That was a rose-hued kerchief once  
He wore across his eyes.

He may not fly, he needs must see—  
He should be glad thereof;  
It was my whim did this for him,  
All carefulness to prove.  
So wise and wingless he, sometime  
I doubt if he be Love.



## THE GIRL AND THE CAR

BY HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH



KILDARE'S sensations as he dressed for dinner were distinctly pleasant, not to say exciting, for he was to renew acquaintance with a girl whom he had known intimately for a few weeks and who had then dropped out of his life. A year and a half before, he had met Irene Morris on shipboard. Theirs had been the friendship that strides through the conventions of acquaintance into the informality of good comradeship. The crossing had been charming, and they had come together occasionally on the other side, meeting with the cordiality that fellow Americans invariably feel in a strange country.

But there the friendship had ceased; or, at least, was hung in abeyance. Kildare had returned to America before Irene, and there had seemed no sufficient reason for corresponding. They lived in different cities, so that a chance encounter was improbable, and Kildare felt emphatically that he might not presume to the extent of journeying to her home town to call.

But he had thought of her often and long. In fact, his heart was touched, deeply, it is inferred, since he was agitated at the prospect of meeting her again.

What were her feelings on the subject? he wondered. Would she be glad to see him? Would she even remember him? The possibility that she had forgotten him harassed Kildare to the point of a delay in his dressing, so that Owens, who occupied the next room, came in to hurry him.

Kildare was spending a month's holiday at an unfashionable seaside resort which contained an unpretentious hotel, several scattered cottages and a charming coterie of people. Kildare's real reason for choosing Baycliffe, however, was the fact that miles of good gravel road encompassed it. Good roads and their consequent benefit to automobilists were Kildare's chief thought just then; or had been until to-night.

During the eighteen months' interim between his meetings with Irene Morris, the automobile fever had broken out in America, and Kildare had caught it badly. It was only recently, however, that he had been able to afford a machine, and he was still in his apprenticeship of running it. He had brought the car with him to Baycliffe in the hope of becoming a proficient chauffeur.

"I wonder if Miss Morris cares for motoring," he said, abruptly, to Owens as they walked together to the cottage of their host.

"Your mind is becoming enlarged," laughed Owens. "For weeks past no one has succeeded in getting any

thought into or out of your head except automobiles. Now a woman is entering into the question." He laughed—more heartily than the occasion seemed to warrant to Kildare, and then continued with a sudden gravity that was in itself impressive:

"If you want a word of advice, Kildare, you won't mention automobiles to Miss Morris. You will bore her to death."

"Does she dislike them so? Perhaps I can convert her," replied the enthusiast.

Owens shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought you wanted to make a good impression."

"So I do," answered Kildare, coloring.

"Then don't begin by boring the girl. Get in the wedge of your personality first. Talk summer talk or reminiscences—girls adore reminiscences; then you can ring in your hobby later on. You are both here for a month."

Kildare reflected and resolved to act upon Owens' advice for that evening, at any rate. Some time, perhaps, after their intimacy had been firmly re-established—and he had practiced a little—he would take her out in his car and convince her of the fascination of the sport. For he knew that automobiling is like being in love; you either have it bad or not at all.

Their meeting in the simply furnished summer drawing room, what they said and the color of her gown were to Kildare all commingled in one hazy, opal-tinted fact. They were together again, and Irene had not forgotten. Seated side by side at table, they took up their friendship where it had left off—on a clear, cold November night in Berlin, when Kildare had said good-bye. Only two attributes can bridge eighteen months in a word: infinite tact and love. Irene certainly possessed the former.

Kildare's first sane consciousness of the moment was that a dozen superfluous people were present; his next, that Irene should never wear any color but pink, with a spangled gauze butterfly in her hair.

"I hear that you have an automobile,"

said Irene, checking rather than coming to the end of their reminiscences. "What sort is it, and what horse power?"

Kildare caught himself in time. In another moment he would have mounted his hobby and galloped—or, perhaps, more appropriately, *motored*—off, to the possible collapse of their renewed friendship. Of course she had asked the question merely out of politeness. And "what horse power" was it? Women were so clever at picking up technical phrases and using them. He smiled to think of the expression of bewilderment that would cloud her flower-like face if he should attempt to explain the make and manner of his machine.

He answered irrelevantly, but Irene, too, had been talking to Owens, and she wanted to give Kildare the opportunity to discuss his favorite topic—the surest way to win a man! So she persisted:

"Is it two-cylinder, and are the cylinders opposed or vertical?" she asked, placidly.

Kildare looked amazed for a moment and then smiled again. She had evidently been reading up on a distasteful subject in order to keep in touch with him. Such a sacrifice must signify something!

"It is only a single cylinder machine, Miss Morris—eight horse power—quite a 'one-horse' affair, you see, and not worth discussing. I should much rather talk about you—and me. Do you remember—" And they were soon mentally abroad, wandering through picture galleries and elysian fields, with never a thought of motor cars.

The next afternoon Kildare took his car out for a trial spin. He had spent the morning with Irene on the beach, and was to go to her house—Mr. Morris had a cottage at Baycliffe, he learned—for a cup of tea at five o'clock. In the meantime he wanted to be alone, to think, to dream.

Kildare chose a road which appeared little used, but was in excellent condition, and which stretched inland at an angle to the sea, bringing one glorious vistas of sparkling blue waters between



the sand dunes, while the roll of the surf boomed in rhythmical accord with the cheerful *chuff-chuff* of the motor. The car was running smoothly, and Kildare felt quite professional. He had gone some distance and was about to turn around to retrace his road to Baycliffe, when, to his utter and bewildered amazement, without any warning symptoms, the motor slowed down gently and stopped.

He climbed down and set about investigating. He knew that a lack of gasoline had not caused the trouble, for he had had the tank filled before leaving the garage. He thought possibly the commutator had got clogged with grease or dirt, and, taking a bottle of gasoline and a bit of rag from his repair kit, he cleaned it. Then he put in the crank and tried to start. The compression was all right; there was no question about that.

"The trouble may be in the carbureter," he reflected, "but I don't like to monkey with it."

The engine was under the car, and, opening the floor of the tonneau, Kildare removed the brass cover of the carbureter and looked at it. He had got a screw-driver out of the tool bag, but was afraid to loosen any of the screws for fear of doing more damage than already existed.

He laid down the screw-driver and went around to the side. He turned the crank again, with the vague idea that the motor had got tired and might now be rested. Then he went and sat on the fence.

He would be too late for his appointment with Irene if he did not do something. Telephoning for a chauffeur was a good idea, if he could find a telephone. He stood on the lowest rail of the fence and looked about. Not a house of any description was in sight.

As he sat there, mournfully surveying his automobile and undecided what to do, Kildare's ear caught the strong, rhythmic whirr familiar to all people acquainted with a big, four-cylinder motor. He looked down the road and saw approaching a huge touring car, painted dull green, with cream-colored wheels,

glittering in brass, and driven—yes, driven by a woman, its sole occupant! Kildare stared, and stared harder as the machine approached, at the rate of thirty miles an hour, for the driver, a tall, slender girl, bareheaded and clad in a linen dust coat, was Irene Morris.

Astonishment paralyzed Kildare. His jaw dropped and his gaze became fixed.

The girl was not aware of the stationary automobile until she was quite close to it. At the same moment she recognized Kildare. She pulled out the clutch and put on brakes. The big machine was going too fast to respond instantly to the signal to stop. It sped a dozen yards or so beyond Kildare before it halted. Then Irene put in the reverse and backed to the side of the other car.

"Hello! Broken down?" she called.

Kildare had come to his senses enough to climb down off the fence and approach, but he was still dazed.

"The motor stopped and I can't get it to go again," he explained, and felt like an idiot. Irene turned off the switch and climbed out of her automobile.

"Ah, you've got a 'Cadford,'" she said. "Let's have a look."

She asked several pertinent questions, and learned the symptoms.

"It sounds like lack of gasoline," she said.

"But I had the tank filled just before I started."

"H'm! Well, it *might* be batteries. Let's have a try."

She removed her dust coat, exhibiting a simple linen frock, short-skirted, in which, Kildare reflected, she looked prettier even than in her pink evening gown, and rolled up her sleeves. Putting in the crank, she turned it slowly. A half revolution produced a strong, steady buzz from the batteries. She released the crank, lifted out the sparking plug so that she could watch it, and bade Kildare turn the crank until it bore on the batteries again.

"A splendid spark! Nothing in the world wrong with that," she cried.

"It *must* be the gasoline. Have you looked at the carbureter?"

"No, I—I was just about to when you

came up. I mean——" he broke off, remembering his position as she drove up. "Fact is, I didn't know what to unscrew," he confessed, manfully.

"Perhaps the intake valve has got stuck. This machine does not use a float," said Irene, kindly ignoring his embarrassment.

She opened the carbureter. It was dry, and yet investigation proved the valve clean and in excellent condition.

"Why, how odd. I can't imagine—you are *sure* you got gasoline?"

"Four gallons. The tank only holds five."

"From whom?"

"Grant."

"He's reliable, so it can't be diluted stuff. I wonder—let me see—oh! Wait a moment!"

She jumped up suddenly and ran around to the front. Kildare followed, and his last bit of self-control was thrown to the winds by the sound of her laugh.

"Look," called Irene. "It is what I thought. The cock that controls your feed-pipe has shaken shut, and of course no gasoline can flow through to the carbureter."

She turned the handle of the cock horizontal with the thin pipe beneath it.

"Have you a bit of wire? Never mind," and before Kildare could offer the wire or any sort of help, her nimble fingers had removed a hairpin, straightened it, and wound it around the loose cock.

"That will hold it until you get home. Then have the chauffeur tighten the set-screw," she directed. "We could do it, but it is hard to get at and we'd get dirty."

"Oh," cried Kildare, "you are wonderful! Irene, will you marry me? I know it seems sudden and—and inappropriate, but I—I do admire you so immensely. I've always loved you."

Irene tried not to smile, and said demurely:

"Suppose we talk it over. I won't say 'this is so sudden,' but it is a bit abrupt."

Kildare picked up his crank.

"I am sorry, but I mean it, just the

same. The words have been saying themselves over in my mind for so long that it does not seem abrupt to me. I wonder they did not speak themselves before this," he said, turning abstractedly.

"I beg pardon, but hadn't you better turn on the electricity?" suggested Irene. "And open the throttle a wee bit."

Kildare looked confused and then rallied.

"It is your fault," he said, dropping the crank and coming close to her. "I thought you hated automobiles, and then to see you driving one, and knowing all about the things, why——"

"It surprised you?" she asked, to fill in a pause that threatened to become eloquent. "How in the world did you happen to be here?" she went on, irrelevantly. "Nobody ever uses this road, as it does not lead anywhere. I was taking Mrs. Wendal and her sister home from a drive in my machine, and came this way as a short cut. I was a little afraid of not getting home in time——"

"In time to give me a cup of tea at five o'clock. Irene, dear, won't you give me something *more*?"

"We'll see when we get there. Crank up, please."

Kildare went through the process of starting his engine, which obeyed the crank like a lamb.

"Dearest," he exclaimed, shutting down the throttle and crossing to where the girl was busy with her own motor, "you did not think me too—too *blunt* just now? I really could not help it. I was thinking about you, you see, and to have you come to my rescue that way, and all——"

"It was a simple thing to do."

"Where did you learn so much about automobiles? I thought they bored you?"

"Bore me! I am daft on the subject."

"But Owens told me that if I talked autos I'd bore—oh, I see, he meant my *ignorance* would bore you!" he broke off, disgustedly. "Irene, marry me and teach me automobiling!"



**T**HE art of flirtation is one about which there is the same difference of opinion as exists between the fisherman and the fish. To the fisherman, angling must ever seem a gentle and pleasing pastime, while the views of the fish concerning the sport depend upon whether it gets caught or not.

In America, flirtation, like croquet, is a game given up almost exclusively to women and clergymen. Whether it lacks enough strenuousness to engage his energy, or whether it fails to afford sufficient excitement to pique his interest, cannot be said, but the truth remains that the average American man is a duffer at playing at love-making. Sentiment is not his *métier*, and he seldom indulges in it unless he means business. The delicate attention without intention at which foreigners are adept; the poetic little notes that imply so much, and say nothing in reality; the languishing glances that are intangible proofs of affection; the lingering pressure of the hand, that may be the result of pure accident or deep design; the ardent vow that always stops just short of a proposal, are subtle points in the game that he never masters. A Frenchman or an Italian can string the delights of a flirtation over a decade of years without ever committing himself to anything more than a Platonic ad-

miration, but the American man who attempts to toy with sentiment almost invariably lands himself in the divorce court or a breach of promise suit.

With American women it is far otherwise. They have brought flirtation to the level of the fine arts. Nor should they be criticised for this. In this country alone, among civilized peoples, must a girl be her own matchmaker, without assistance from mother, dowry, or any other of the first aids to matrimony. This has forced her to make of coquetry a weapon of offense and defense, and that she has learned to use it with surpassing skill is abundantly proven not only by the scalps of her own mankind that hang at her belt, but by the big game that she has successfully bagged in Europe, where, at her approach, the native woman takes to cover while she watches the American huntswoman snare dukes and lords and counts with a skill she envies but cannot emulate.

Many things besides necessity have made the American woman an expert at flirtation. For one thing, she is trained to it from her earliest infancy. While still in the cradle she begins practicing her smiles upon her father, and ascertains that she can googly-goo him into walking her by the hour; as a little girl in short frocks and pigtails, she

finds out that her eyes were given her to roll at some particular little boy; a college course gives her the length and breadth of masculine weakness where her sex is concerned, and so at an age when the women of other countries, where there is no such free social intercourse between the sexes as she has enjoyed, are just beginning to learn their notes about man, she can play upon him as upon a harp with a thousand strings.

This is where she has the advantage of the Parisian woman, who is her only rival in finesse in playing the game of hearts, but there is this difference between the American flirt and the Parisian flirt—the Parisian woman seldom indulges in a flirtation until after she is safely married, whereas the American woman's flirtations are almost all conducted on the skirmish line before she is married. Thus the difference is the difference between a French duel, where a man is counted out when he is touched by the dull point of a rapier, and a Kentucky duel, which calls for a funeral.

Of course, stern moralists do not approve of the flirt. They talk of broken hearts, and wrecked lives, and other piteous things for which they hold her responsible, but in reality the coquette does small harm. Little as we like to admit it, the human heart is constructed after the plan of the football instead of a Sèvres vase, and a few kicks do it no hurt. More than that, 'tis a dull man who cannot tell an imitation from the real article, and it is doubtful if the woman who plays at love ever deceives anyone into believing that she is in earnest; and even if she does, in faith, it's better to have been loved in jest than never to have been loved at all.

Yet, gay butterfly that she is, the flirt presents an interesting study to us, and not without profit may we consider her ways and be wise. The first and most noticeable, because she is the most numerous, is what may be called the universal flirt. She is an indiscriminate angler for men, and all that comes to her net is fish. She robs the cradle and the grave for conquests, and lavishes

her smiles upon any man that happens to be nearest. She is the kind of a girl who never dresses up or wakes up until a man dawns on the scene, and who is universally hated and execrated by her own sex. Men think it is because women are jealous of her. In reality, it is disgust at seeing one muff the ball so badly, for the woman who throws herself at every man's head never hits any man's heart. This type of flirt is only dangerous to doty old men and callow youths who need encouragement, for the affections that are run on the department-store principle have, at best, merely the attractions of the bargain counter to offer.

The sentimental flirt is also generally innocuous, because she overdoes a good thing. She cloy on the appetite like too much chocolate cream. The sentimental flirt has a soulful air and a hungry look. In the summer she wanders along the seashore with a volume of poems clasped to her throbbing heart, and she can beat *Sherlock Holmes* on finding sequestered spots where nobody can break in on a man in time to save him from proposing. In the winter, at parties, she always insists on sitting out the dances under the palms instead of two-stepping it under the bright glare of electric lights, and under any and all circumstances she can be guaranteed to steer the conversation around to the subject of love in the second act.

Moonlight effects are not to be ignored, poetry is a valuable ally, and solitary nooks give a suggestive stage setting, but man is a shy creature and a contrary one in matters of the affection. Let him but suspect that a woman is trying to inveigle him into making love to her, and wild horses couldn't drag a word of sentiment out of him. Not without reason has it become customary for women to exclaim, upon receiving a proposal of marriage: "This is so sudden! I never dreamed that you thought of me in that way." This serves a double purpose of covering up the girl's own maneuvers, and making the man feel that he did it of his own accord. Another reason that the sentimental flirt is without danger is because,

while men like sentiment as a relish, few care for it as a steady diet, and they equally abhor the woman who feeds them on it and the one who has an insatiable appetite for it herself.

The girl who flirts with everybody, and the girl who will flirt with anybody, are so harmless that even a college boy may play with them in safety, but quite the reverse is the girl who apparently flirts with nobody. She ought to be required to wear a red lantern around her neck, for she is dangerous. This is the pious girl. The only good thing in the world that men are willing to take at second hand from women is their religion. They don't want to be restricted by creeds, but they have a simple and childlike faith in the girl who can swallow her catechism whole without making faces, and she may lead them where she lists.

This is where the pious girl has her innings. She never talks to a man about his heart. It is always his soul, and she assumes a soft, rapt look as she turns her perfect profile upon him—if you will notice you will see that a girl rarely goes in for piety until she assures herself that she has a good nose and a Mona Lisa expression. Then, with a little catch in her voice, she murmurs intense things to him about the higher life, and says that she will pray for him, and it is all up with him then. It is so pure and angelic, and so altogether what he expects of women, that he surrenders without a struggle. Then who so surprised, so grieved, so shocked, as the pious flirt when she find out that a man has mistaken her altruistic interest in his immortal soul for personal interest in his manly heart? Many daughters have done well, but when it comes to knowing her business, the pious girl excelleth them all.

Close akin to her is the domestic flirt. She is the girl who has been wise enough to discover that she hunts best who hunts on her own preserves, so to speak. It is a signal proof of human stupidity that so few women realize the value of home as a background, and domesticity as an atmosphere. Women affect to be coy, to be clever, to be beau-

tiful, and in vain is set the snare of the fowler, but the minute they begin radiating an air of housewifely virtue, men flock to them and become so tame that they will eat out of their hands. It was this fact that caused Thackeray to make *Becky Sharp*, that arch flirt, when she especially wished to fascinate a man, always get out the little shirt that she was so long making for *Rawdon* that he was a grown man before it was finished. The same tactics still work, and the woman who leaves her own drawing room, when she goes forth for conquest, throws away half of her ammunition.

The girl who is merely agreeable at a party becomes enchanting when you gaze at her through the aroma of her own punch, or the halo cast about her by the steam from her own chafing dish. The domestic flirt knows this. She also knows that what the pink mosquito netting over the top of the basket is to the hard and knotty peach, so is the red-shaded parlor lamp to the homely woman, and she camps within its beneficent radiance. Nor is she unmindful of the truth of the old adage that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. She takes the shortest cut to it, and the result is inevitable. Before he knows it, a man is thinking how pleasant it would be to have that comely face smiling at him across a breakfast table set for two, and when he learns that this household treasure is not for him, he receives a solar plexus blow that, for the time being, puts him out of the matrimonial ring. All the scathing things that have ever been written about flirts have doubtless emanated from dyspeptic men who have been jilted by domestic flirts, and who realized that they had not only been robbed of their heart, but had lost a good cook as well.

The good-fellow flirt is particularly dangerous, because, on the outside, she looks so harmless. She disarms suspicion by an affectation of mannishness. This is the art of her, for it makes a man let down his guard. With a woman who frankly seeks to win his admiration, a man is on the defensive and hence reasonably safe, but with one who

apparently cares nothing for him, he allows himself to be duped into a false security in which he is easily captured.

"Here," says a man to himself, "is a chance to enjoy a woman's society without the everlasting question of love coming up, and the danger of running your head into the matrimonial noose. I'd no more think of falling in love with a girl who rolls her sleeves up above her elbows and plays golf all day, and who would rather talk sports than to have compliments paid her, than I would think of falling in love with my little brother. Here's one woman, thank Heaven, who has no sentiment about her." But somehow sentiment creeps in. Cupid turns caddie on the links. The good-fellow girl brings down something more than a bird with her little gun. The veneer of mannishness breaks through at some critical moment, and the man finds himself murmuring words in the good fellow's ears that he would never say to any real man, and when it is all over, and the good fellow is so grieved because he mistook their comradeship for something else, he isn't consoled even by her promise to be a brother to him.

The one-man girl—the girl who separates one individual man from the balance of the herd, and runs him down—is also extremely dangerous, for she is a mighty Nimrod. The girl who flirts with men *en masse* is merely a pot hunter, with a weather eye out for theater tickets and violets and automobile rides, and she hurts a man's pocket-book oftener than she does his heart. In sentiment there is safety in numbers. No girl can flirt with two men at the same time and preserve a good average. It is only when she can play her admirers in relays that she does any damage, and when a man begins to find out that he has a whole evening to himself when he calls, it is time for him to watch out.

This is especially true if the time is Sunday night. There is something peculiarly fatal in being a Sunday night beau. Indeed, to a superstitious man the legend, "Abandon hope to celibacy all ye who enter here," seems to be in-

scribed in letters visible to his spirit on Sabbath evenings across the parlor door. A man can't play cards on Sunday night, or suggest the theater, or catch at any other life-saving straw. He can only talk. This is where the storm center originated. From eight-thirty to nine o'clock suffices to exhaust topics of general interest. By nine conversation is growing personal. At nine-thirty it has warmed up into sentiment. By ten he finds himself telling her he never loved before, and can never love again, and asking her to put her little hand in his and lead him up to the New Thought, and——

And she says, "Really, Mr. Simpkins, this is so unexpected. I am sure I never led you to believe that I cared for you, except as a friend, and if you have misunderstood my efforts to throw the uplifting influence of a Christian home about you on Sabbath evenings, I'm not to blame," etc., etc.

And as Mr. Simpkins makes his way down the front steps, the one-man flirt sets her bower in order again, and mentally ejaculates, "Next!"

The summer flirt is not nearly as much a menace to men's peace of mind and heart as she is represented, because her methods are too open. She is too obviously in the game. She has gone to the mountains or the seashore for amusement, and she will flirt with little Willie or senile grandpa, if no other man is about. The man who is taken in by her must either be so young he has not cut his wisdom teeth or else so old that he has shed them. She sets her traps in the hammock, on the shady corners of her veranda, in moonlight rows on the lake, or in long strolls down narrow pathways, and a man must indeed be blind not to see them in time to avoid the snare, if he so desires. If he seldom does, it is because flirtation is a two-handed game, which a man can play as well as a woman. Still, when a man thinks of the things he has said to the summer flirt, he generally puts up a prayer of thanksgiving that the recording angel takes a vacation and shuts up shop in the dog days.

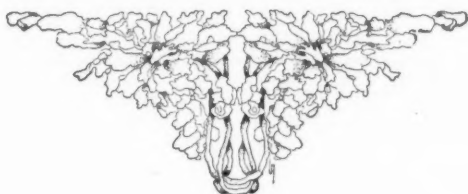
The flirtatious widow—the one wom-



an in the world who understands the Alpha and Omega of coquetry, who knows how to blow hot and how to blow cold, when to be coy and when to chase a man down, who knows when to cheer a man by her gay laughter and when to weep upon the second button of his waistcoat—but why speak of her? Just as there are risks so dangerous no insurance company would take them, so there are subjects so hazardous no one would dare to advise upon them.

These words are to the brave, not the foolhardy, and the man who engages in a flirtation with a widow must take the consequences of his daring.

To the variety of flirts there is no end, and much study of them is provocative of great wisdom, for the game of playing at love is one that will go on as long as men are men and women are women. And if sometimes a player gets hurt—well, after all, it is the danger that makes any sport worth while.



## CERTAIN FRAGMENTS FROM THE ARABIC

### I.

THE myrtles of Damascus, when they smile,  
Exalt my soul to some remote, high place,—  
But, oh! thy face!

Roses of Baghdad, bathed in moonlight dew,  
Make my heart drunk when all their joy it sips,—  
But, oh! thy lips!

### II.

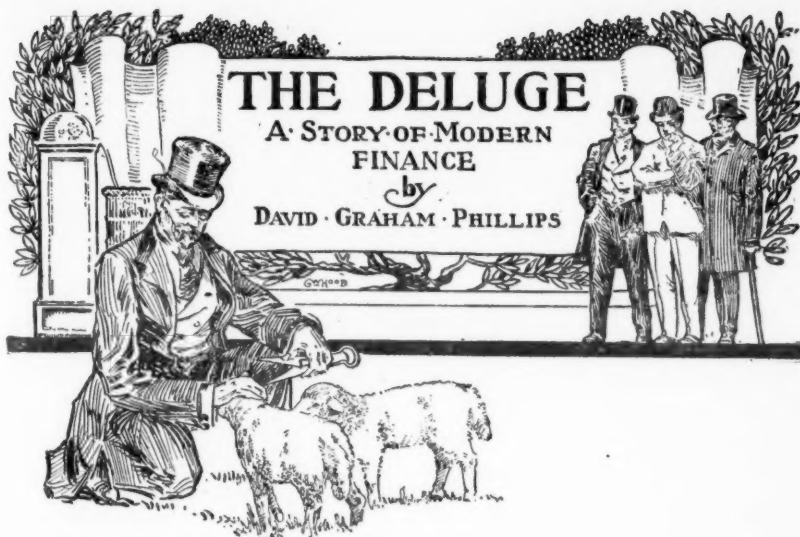
O form to which the palms have lent their grace,  
And all the jasmynes given their perfume,  
What lovelier form goes wandering thro' earth's room?

O eyes to which the diamond lends its light,  
And night its radiant stars,  
What woman's eyes give forth a fire more bright?

O kiss more sweet than honey from her mouth,  
What woman's kiss is fresher from the south?

O to caress thy hair! to feel my flesh  
Thrill against thine! Then to gaze in thine eyes,  
And see the stars arise!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



WHEN Napoleon was about to crown himself—so I have read—they submitted to him the royal genealogy they had faked up for him. He crumpled the parchment and flung it in the face of the chief herald, or whoever it was. "My line," said he, "dates from Montenotte." And so I say, my line dates from the victory which completed and established my fame—from "Wild Week." I shall not waste my own and my fellow men's time with the details of the obscurity from which I emerged. I shall not even recite my rise from that obscurity. It is an interesting, a romantic story; but it is the familiar story, also, in this land which Lincoln so finely described when he said: "The republic is opportunity."

One fact I shall state: *I did not take the name Blacklock.* I was born Blacklock, and christened Matthew; and my hair's being very black and growing so that a lock of it often falls down the

middle of my forehead is coincidence. The malicious and insinuating story that I used to go under another name arose, no doubt, from my having been a bootblack in my early days, and having let my customers shorten my name into Matt Black. But, as soon as I graduated from manual labor, I resumed my rightful name and have borne it—I think I may say without vanity—in honor to honor.

Some one has said: "It was a great day for fools when modesty was made a virtue." I heartily subscribe to that. Life means action; action means self-assertion: self-assertion rouses all the small, colorless people to the only sort of action of which they are capable—to venomous sneering at the doer as egotistical, vain, conceited, bumptious and the like. So be it! I have an individuality, aggressive, restless and, like all such individualities, happiest in the limelight; I have from the beginning lost no opportunity to impress that individuality upon the people and events

of my time. Let those who have nothing to advertise, and those who have been less courageous and successful than I at self-advertisement, jeer and spit. I ignore them. I make no apologies for egotism. I think, when my readers have finished, they will demand none. They will see that I had a great work to do, and that I did it in the only way an intelligent man ever tries to do his work—his own way, the way natural to him.

Wild Week! The cyclones, rising fury on fury from Gray Monday through Blue Tuesday and Wednesday, through Black Thursday to Frenzied Friday, with its climax of collapse and chaos, sing their mad song in my ears again as I write; thrill me again with the joy only the great leaders have in their moment of triumph, when above the agony of the battle rise the clear notes of the bugles of victory.

My story shall be only of Wild Week, beginning with the events that set me on to plan its historic campaign. If my readers expect me to confine myself to a series of pictures of business and finance, they will be disappointed. Take a cross-section of life anywhere, and you have a tangled interweaving of the relations of men with men, of women with women, of men and women with each other. And this story of mine is a cross-section out of the very heart of the life of to-day, with its big and bold energies and passions—the swiftest and fiercest life ever lived by the human race.

To begin:

### I.

Imagine yourself back two years and a half before Wild Week, back at the time when the kings of finance had just completed their apparently final conquest of the industries of the country, when they were seating themselves upon thrones encircled by vast armies of capital and brains, when all the governments of the nation—national, state and city—were prostrate under their iron heels. You will remember that I was a not inconspicuous figure then.

Of all their agents, I was the best

known, the most trusted by them, the most believed in by the people. I had a magnificent suite of offices in the building that dominates Wall and Broad Streets. Boston claimed me also, and Chicago; and in Philadelphia, New Orleans, St. Louis, San Francisco, in the towns and rural districts tributary to the cities, thousands spoke of Blacklock as their trusted adviser in matters of finance. My enemies—and I had them, numerous and venomous enough to prove my claims to greatness—my enemies spoke of me as the “greatest bucket-shop gambler” in the world.

Gambler I was—like all the other manipulators of the markets. But “bucket shop” I never kept. As the kings of finance were the representatives of the great merchants, manufacturers and investors, so was I the representative of the masses, of those who wished their small savings properly invested. The power of the big fellows was founded upon wealth and the highest order of shrewd brains; my power was founded upon the hearts and homes of the people, upon faith in my frank honesty.

How had I built up my power? By recognizing the possibilities of publicity, the opportunity the broadcast scattering of newspapers and magazines had put within the reach of the individual man to impress himself upon the whole country, upon the whole civilized world. The kings of finance relied upon the assiduity and dexterity of sundry paid agents, operating through the heavy, clumsy, old-fashioned channels for the exercise of power. I relied only upon myself; I had to trust to no fallible, perhaps traitorous, understrappers; through the megaphone of the press I spoke directly to the people.

My enemies charge that I am, and always have been, unscrupulous and dishonest. So? Then how have I lived and thrived all these years in the glare and blare of publicity?

It is true that I have used the “methods of the charlatan” in bringing myself into wide public notice. The better way to put it would be to say that I have used intelligently and for honest

purposes the methods of publicity which charlatans have shrewdly appropriated because by those means the public can be most widely and most quickly reached. Does good become evil because hypocrites use it as a cloak? It is also true that I have been "undignified." Let the stupid cover their stupidity with "dignity." Let the swindler hide his schemings under "dignity." I am a man of the people, not afraid to be seen as the human being that I am. I laugh when I feel like it. I have no sense of jar when people call me "Matt." I have a good time, and I shall stay young as long as I stay alive. Wealth hasn't made me a solemn ass, fenced in and unapproachable. The custom of receiving obedience and flattery and admiration has not made me a turkey cock. Life is a joke; and when the joke's on me, I laugh as heartily as when it's on the other fellow.

It is half-past three o'clock on a May afternoon; a dismal, dreary rain is being whirled through the streets by as nasty a wind as ever blew out of the east. You are in the private office of Henry J. Roebuck, philanthropist, eminent churchman, leading citizen and—in business—as dishonest and corrupt a creature as ever masqueraded in the mantle of respectability. That office is on the twelfth floor of the Power Trust Building—and the Power Trust is Roebuck, and Roebuck is the Power Trust. Just now he is seated at his desk and, thinking that I cannot see him, is looking at me with an expression of benevolent and melancholy pity—the look with which he always regarded anyone whom the Roebuck God Almighty had commanded Roebuck to destroy. He and his God were in constant communication; his God never did anything except for his benefit, he never did anything except on the direct counsel or command of his God. Just now his God was commanding him to destroy me, his confidential agent in shaping many a vast industrial enterprise and in inducing the public to buy by the million its bonds and stocks.

I had invited the frown of the angry Roebuck God by saying: "And I bought

in the Manasquale mines on my own account."

"On your own account!" said Roebuck. Then he hastily effaced his involuntary air of the engineer who has been startled by the sight of an unexpected red light.

"Yes," said I, as calmly as if I did not realize the tremendous significance of what I had announced. "And I look to you to let me participate on equal terms."

That is, I had decided that the time had come for me to take my place among the kings of finance. I had decided to promote myself from agent to principal, from prime minister to king—I must, myself, promote myself, for in this world all promotion that is solid comes from within. And in furtherance of this object I had bought this group of mines, control of which was vital to the Roebuck-Langdon-Melville combine for a monopoly of the coal of the country.

"Did not Mr. Langdon commission you to buy them for him and his friends?" inquired Roebuck, in that slow, placid tone which yet, for the attentive ear, had a note in it like the scream of a jaguar who comes home and finds her cubs gone.

"But I couldn't get it for him," I explained. "The owners wouldn't sell unless there was a specific agreement that none of the men in the National Coal and Railway Company was to get it."

"Oh, I see," said Roebuck, sinking back in his chair in a way that suggested relief. "We must get Browne to draw up some sort of perpetual, irrevocable power of attorney for you to sign."

"But I won't sign it," said I, bluntly.

Roebuck took up a sheet of paper and began to fold it upon itself with great care to get the edges straight.

"For four years now," I went on, "you people have been promising to take me in as principal in some one of your deals—to give me recognition by making me president or chairman of an executive or finance committee. I am an impatient man, Mr. Roebuck. Life is short, and I have much to do.

So I have bought the Manasquale mines—and I shall hold them.”

Roebuck continued to fold the paper upon itself until he had reduced it to a small, short, thick strip. This he slowly twisted between his strong, cruel fingers until it was torn into two pieces. He threw the pieces into the waste basket and smiled benevolently at me. “You are right,” he said. “You shall have what you want. You have seemed such a mere boy to me that, in spite of your giving again and again proof of what you are, I have been putting you off. Then, too——” He hesitated, gave me a kindly smile.

“The bucket shop?” said I, with a laugh.

“Exactly,” said he. “Your brokerage business has been invaluable to us. But—well, I needn’t tell you how people—the men of standing—look on that sort of thing.”

“I never have paid any attention to pompous pretenses,” said I. “And I never shall. My brokerage business must go on, and my daily letters to investors. By advertising I rose; by advertising I am a power that even you must recognize; by advertising alone can I keep that power.”

“You forget that in the new circumstances, you won’t need that sort of power. You should adapt yourself to your new surroundings. Overalls for the trench; a business suit for the office.”

“I shall keep to my overalls for the present,” said I. “They’re more comfortable, and”—here I winked at him—“if I shed them, I might have to go naked. The first principle of business is never to give up what you have until your grip is tight on something better.”

“No doubt you’re right,” said the white-haired old scoundrel, giving no sign that he realized that I had fathomed his deep motive for trying to “hint” me out of my stronghold. “I will talk the matter over with Langdon and Melville. Rest assured, my boy, that you will be satisfied.” He got up, put his arm affectionately round my shoulders. “We all like you. I have a feeling toward you as if you were my

own son. I am getting old, and I like to see young men about me, growing up to assume the responsibilities of the Lord’s work when He calls me to my reward.”

It will seem incredible that a man of my shrewdness and experience could be taken in by such slimy stuff as that—I who knew Roebuck as only a few insiders knew him, I who had seen him at work, as devoid of human feeling as an empty spider in an empty web. Yet I now thought he purposed to recognize my services, to yield to the only persuasion which could affect him—force. I fancied he was actually about to put me where I could be of the highest usefulness to him and his associates, as well as to myself.

It was with tears in my eyes that I shook hands with him, thanking him emotionally. It was with a high chin and a proud heart that I went back to my offices. There wasn’t a doubt in my mind that I was about to get my deserts, was about to enter the charmed circles of “finance.”

That small and exclusive circle, into which I was seeing myself admitted without the usual arduous and unequal battle, was what may be called the industrial ring—a loose, yet tight, combine of about a dozen men who controlled in one way or another practically all the industries of the country. They had no formal agreements; they held no official meetings. They probably did not look upon themselves as an association. They often quarreled among themselves, waged bitter wars upon each other over divisions of power or of plunder. But, in the broad sense, in the true sense, they were an association—a band united by a common interest, to control finance, commerce and therefore politics; a band united by a common purpose, to keep that control in as few hands as possible. Whenever there was sign of peril from the common foe, the masses of the people, they flung away differences, pooled resources, marched in full force to put down the insurrection. For they looked on any attempt to interfere with them as a mutiny, as an outbreak of anarchy. This

band persisted, but membership in it changed, changed rapidly. Now, one would be beaten to death and despoiled by a clique of fellows; again, weak or rash ones would be cut off in some very strenuous battle. Often, most often, some too powerful or too arrogant member would be secretly and stealthily assassinated by a jealous associate or by a committee of internal safety. Of course, I do not mean literally assassinated, but assassinated, cut off, destroyed, in the sense that a man whose whole life is wealth and power is dead when wealth and power are taken from him.

Actual assassination, the crime of murder—these “gentlemen” rarely did anything which their lawyers did not advise them was legal or could be made so, by bribery of one kind or another. Rarely, I say—not never. You will see presently why I make that qualification.

I had my heart set upon becoming a member of this band—and as I confess now to my shame, my prejudices of self-interest had blinded me into regarding it and its members as great and useful and honorable “captains of industry.” Honorable in the main; for, not even my prejudice could blind me to the almost hair-raising atrocity of some of their doings. Still, morality is largely a question of environment; I had been bred up in that environment, and even the atrocities I excused on the ground that he who goes forth to battle must be prepared to do and to tolerate many acts the church would have to strain a point to bless. What was Columbus but a marauder, a buccaneer? Was not Drake, in law and in fact, a pirate, Washington a traitor to his oath of allegiance to King George? I had much to learn, and to unlearn. I was to find out that whenever a Roebuck puts his arm round you, it is invariably to get within your guard and nearer your fifth rib. I was to trace the ugliest deformities of that conscience of his, hidden away down inside of him like a dwarfed, starved prisoner in an underground dungeon. I was to be astounded by revelations of Langdon, who was not a believer, like Roebuck, and so was not

under the restraint of the feeling that he must keep some sort of ledgers of conscience against the inspection of the angelic auditing committee on the day of wrath.

Much to learn—and to unlearn. It makes me laugh as I recall how, on that May day, I looked into the first mirror I was alone with, smiled delighted as an idiot with myself and said: “Matt, you are one of the kings now. Your crown suits you and, as you’ve earned it, you know how to keep it. Now for some fun with your fellow sovereigns!”

A little premature, that preening!

## II.

In my suite in the Textile Building, just off the big main room where my quotation blackboards and public tickers were, I had a small office in which I spent a good deal of time during Stock Exchange hours. It was in there that Sam Ellersly found me on the next day but one after my talk with Roebuck. “I want you to sell that Steel Common, Matt,” said he.

“It’ll be several points higher,” said I. “Better let me hold it and use my judgment on selling.”

“I need the money—right away,” was his answer.

“That’s all right,” said I. “Let me give you an order for what you need.”

“Thank you, thank you,” said he, so promptly that I knew I had done what he had been hoping for, probably counting on.

I give this incident to show what our relations were. He was a young fellow of good family, to whom I had taken a liking. He was a lazy dog, and as out of place in business as a cat in a choir. I had been keeping him going for four years at that time, by giving him tips on stocks and protecting him against loss. I had been doing this purely out of good nature, generosity and liking; for then I hadn’t the remotest idea he could ever be of use to me beyond helping to liven things up at a dinner or late supper, or down in the country, or on the yacht. In fact, his principal use to me was that he knew how to “beat



the box" well enough to shake fairly good music out of it—and I am so fond of music that I can fill in with my imagination when the performer isn't too bad.

They have charged that I deliberately ruined him. Ruined! The first time I gave him a tip—and that was the second or third time I ever saw him—he burst into tears and said: "You've saved my life, Blacklock. I'll never tell you how much this windfall means to me now." Nor did I keep him along on the ragged edge, with deep and dark design. He kept himself there. How could I build up a man who had a hundred ways of wasting money, including throwing it away on his own opinions of stocks—for he would gamble on his own account in the bucket shops, though I had carefully shown him that the Wall Street game is played always with marked cards, and that the only hope of winning is to get the confidence of the card markers, unless you are big enough to become a card marker yourself.

As soon as he got the money from my teller, he was rushing away. I followed him to the door—that part of my suite opened out on the sidewalk, for the convenience of my crowds of customers. "I'm just going to lunch," said I. "Come with me."

He looked uneasily toward a smart little one-horse brougham at the curb. "Sorry—but I can't," said he. "I've my sister with me. She brought me down in her trap."

"That's all right," said I; "bring her along. We'll go to the Savarin." And I locked his arm in mine and started toward the brougham.

He was turning all kinds of colors, and was acting in a way that puzzled me—then. "Thank you—but—I—she—the fact is, we really must get uptown."

By this time I was where I could look into the brougham. A glance—I can see much at a glance, as can any man who spends every day of every year in an all-day fight for his purse and his life, with the blows coming from all sides. I can see much at a glance: I

often have seen much; I never saw more than just then. Instantly, I made up my mind that the Ellerslys would lunch with me. "You've got to eat somewhere," said I, in a tone that put an end to his attempts to manufacture excuses. "I'll be delighted to have you. Don't make up any more yarns."

He slowly opened the door. "Anita," said he, "Mr. Blacklock. He's invited us to lunch."

I lifted my hat, and bowed. I kept my eyes straight upon hers. And it gave me more pleasure to look into them than I had ever before got out of looking into anybody's. I am passionately fond of flowers, and of children; and her face reminded me of both. Or, rather, it seemed to me that what I had seen, with delight and longing, incomplete in their freshness and beauty and charm, was now before me in the fullness. She looked as straight at me as I at her, and I noticed that she paled a little and shrank—yet continued to look, as if I were compelling her. But her voice, beautifully clear, and lingering in the ears like the resonance of the violin after the bow has swept its strings and lifted, was perfectly self-possessed, as she said to her brother: "That will be delightful—if you think we have time."

I saw that she, uncertain whether he wished to accept, was giving him a chance to take either course. "He has time—nothing but time," said I. "His engagements are always with people who want to get something out of him. And they can wait." I pretended to think he was expecting me to enter the trap; I got in, seated myself beside her, said to Sam: "I've saved the little seat for you. Tell your man to take us to the Equitable Building—Nassau Street entrance."

I talked a good deal during the first half of the nearly two hours we were together—partly because Sam and his sister both seemed to be under some sort of a strain, chiefly because I was determined to make a good impression. I told her about myself, my horses, my house in the country, my yacht. I tried to show her that I wasn't an ignoramus as to books and art, even if I hadn't

been to college. She listened, while Sam sat embarrassed. "You must bring your sister down to visit me," I said, finally. "I'll see that you both have the time of your lives. Make up a party of your friends, Sam, and come down—when shall we say? Next Sunday? You know you were coming anyhow. I can change the rest of the party."

Sam grew as red as if he were going into apoplexy. I thought then he was afraid I'd blurt out something about who were in the party I was proposing to change—as if I didn't know the rudiments, at least, of being a gentleman. I say I then thought that was the reason for his confusion; I know better now.

"Thank you, Mr.—Blacklock," said his sister. "But I have an engagement next Sunday. I have a great many engagements just now. Without looking at my book I couldn't say when I can go."

Sam gave her a grateful look, which he thought I didn't see, and which I didn't rightly interpret—then.

"We'll fix it up later, Blacklock," said he.

"All right," said I. And from that minute I was almost silent. It was something in her tone and manner that had silenced me. I suddenly realized that I hadn't made as good an impression as I had been flattering myself.

When a man has money and is willing to spend it, he can easily fool himself into imagining he gets on grandly with the women. But I had better grounds than that for thinking myself not unattractive to them, as a rule. Women had liked me when I had nothing; women had liked me when they didn't know who I was. I felt that this woman did not like me. And yet, by the way she looked at me in spite of her efforts not to do so, I could tell that I had some sort of unusual interest for her. Why didn't she like me? She made me feel the reason. I didn't belong to her world. My ways and my looks offended her. She disliked me a good deal; she feared me a little. She would have felt safer if she had been gratifying her curiosity, looking in at me through the bars of a cage.

Where I had been feeling and showing my usual assurance, I now became ill at ease. I longed for them to be gone; at the same time I hated to see her go—for, when and how would I see her again, would I get the chance to remove her bad impression? It irritated me thus to be concerned about the sister of a man into my liking for whom there was mixed much pity and some contempt. But I am of the disposition that, whenever I see an obstacle of whatever kind, I cannot restrain myself from trying to jump it. Here was an obstacle—a dislike. To clear it was of not the smallest importance in the world, was a silly waste of time. Yet I felt I could not maintain with myself my boast that there were no obstacles I couldn't get over, if I turned aside from this.

Sam—not without hesitation, as I recalled afterward—left me alone with her, when I sent him to bring her brougham up to the Broadway entrance. As she and I were standing there alone, waiting in silence, I turned on her suddenly and said: "You don't like me."

She reddened a little, smiled slightly. "What a quaint remark!" said she.

I looked straight at her. "But you shall," said I.

Our eyes met. Her chin came out a little, her eyebrows lifted. Then, in scorn of herself as well as of me, she locked herself in behind a frozen haughtiness that ignored me. "Ah, here is the carriage," she said. I followed her to the curb; she just touched my hand, just nodded her fascinating little head.

"See you Saturday, old man," called her brother, friendly. My lowering face had made him afraid I was offended.

"That party is off," said I, curtly. And I lifted my hat and strode away.

As I had formed the habit of dismissing the disagreeable, I soon put her out of my mind. But she took with her my joy in the taste of things. I couldn't get back my former keen satisfaction in all I had done and was doing. The luxury, the tangible evidences of my

achievement, no longer gave me pleasure; they seemed to add to my irritation. That's the way it is in life. We load ourselves down with toys like greedy children; then we see another toy and drop everything to be free to seize it; and if we cannot, we're wretched. Not that I wanted *her*. No, it was simply that she stood for the whole class of things I wanted.

I worked myself up, or, rather, down, to such a mood that when my office boy told me Mr. Langdon would like me to come to his office as soon as it was convenient, I snapped out: "The h—l he does! Tell Mr. Langdon I'll be glad to see him here whenever he calls." That was stupidity, a premature assertion of my right to be treated as an equal. I had always gone to Langdon, and to any other of the rulers of finance, whenever I had got a summons. For, while I was rich and powerful, I held both wealth and power, in a sense, on sufferance; I knew that, so long as I had no absolute control of any great department of industry, these rulers could destroy me should they decide that they needed my holdings or were not satisfied with my use of my power. There were a good many people who did not realize that property rights had ceased to exist, that property had become a revocable grant from the "plutocrats." I was not of those misguided ones who had failed to discover the new fact concealed in the old form. So I used to go when I was summoned.

But not that day. However, no sooner was my boy gone with my audacious message to Langdon than I repented the imprudence. "But what of it?" said I to myself. "No matter how the thing turns out, I shall be able to get some advantage." For it was part of my philosophy that a proper boat with proper sails and a proper steersman can gain in any wind. I was surprised when Langdon appeared in my office a few minutes later.

He was a tallish, slim man, carefully dressed, with a bored, weary look and a slow, bored way of talking. I had always said that if I had not been myself I should have wished to be Lang-

don. Men liked and admired him; women loved and ran after him. Yet he exerted not the slightest effort to please anyone; on the contrary, he made it distinct and clear that he didn't care a rap what anyone thought of him or, for that matter, of anybody or anything. He knew how to get, without sweat or snatching, all the good there was in whatever life threw in his way—and he was one of those men into whose way life seems to strive to put everything worth having. His business judgment was shrewd, but he cared nothing for the big game he was playing except as a game. Like myself, he was simply a sportsman—and, I think, that is why we liked each other. He could have trusted almost anyone that came into contact with him; but he trusted nobody, and frankly warned everyone not to trust him—a safe frankness, for his charm caused it to be forgotten or ignored. He would do anything to gain an object, however trivial, which chanced to catch his fancy; once it was his, he would throw it aside as carelessly as an ill-fitting collar.

His expression, as he came into my office, was one of cynical amusement, as if he were saying to himself: "Our friend Blacklock has caught the swollen head at last." Not a suggestion of ill humor, of resentment at my impertinence—for, in the circumstances, I had been guilty of an impertinence. Just languid, amused patience with the frailty of a friend. "I see," said he, "that you have got Textile up to eighty-five."

He was the head of the Textile Trust which had been built by his brother-in-law and had fallen to him in the confusion following his brother-in-law's death. As he was just then needing some money for his share in the National Coal undertaking, he had directed me to push Textile up toward par and unload him of two or three hundred thousand shares—he, of course, to repurchase the shares after he had taken profits and Textile had dropped back to its normal fifty.

"I'll have it up to ninety-eight by

the middle of next month," said I. "And there I think we'd better stop."

"Stop at about ninety," said he. "That will give me all I find I'll need for this Coal business. I don't want to be bothered with hunting up another investment."

I shook my head. "I must put it up to within a point or two of par," I declared. "In my public letter I've been saying it would go above ninety-five, and I never deceive my public."

He smiled—my notion of honesty always amused him. "As you please," he said, with a shrug. Then I saw a serious look—just a fleeting flash of warning—behind his smiling mask; and he added, carelessly: "Be careful about your own personal play. I doubt if Textile can be put any higher."

It must have been my mood that prevented these words from making the impression on me they should have made. Instead of appreciating at once and at its full value this characteristic and amazingly friendly signal of caution, I showed how stupidly inattentive I was by saying: "Something doing? Something new?"

But he had already gone further than his notion, or my expectation, of friendship warranted. So he replied: "Oh, no. Simply that everything's uncertain nowadays."

My mind had been all this time on those Manasquale mining properties. I now said: "Has Mr. Roebuck told you that I had to buy those mines on my own account?"

"Yes," he said. He hesitated, and again he gave me a look whose meaning came to me only when it was too late. "I think, Blacklock, you'd better turn them over to me."

"I'll turn them back to the Spencers," I answered. "But I can't let you have them. I gave my word—not to speak of the contract."

"As you please," said he.

Apparently the matter didn't interest him. He began to talk of the performances of my little two-year-old, Beachcomber; and after twenty minutes or so, he drifted away. "I envy you your enthusiasm," he said, pausing in my door-

way. "Wherever I am, I wish I were somewhere else. Whatever I'm doing, I wish I were doing something else. Where do you get all this joy of the fight? What the devil are you fighting for?"

He didn't wait for my answer.

I thought over my situation steadily for several days. I went down to my country place. I looked everywhere among all my belongings, searching, searching, restless, impatient. At last I knew what ailed me—what the lack was that yawned so gloomily from everything I had once thought beautiful, had once found sufficient. I was in the midst of the splendid, terraced pansy beds my gardeners had just set out; I stopped short and slapped my thigh. "A woman!" I exclaimed. "That's what I need. A woman—the right sort of a woman—a wife!"

To handle this new business properly I must put myself in position to look the whole field over. I must get in line and in touch with respectability.

When Sam Ellersly came in for his "rations," I said: "Sam, I want you to put me up at the Traveler's Club."

"The Traveler's!" said he, with a blank look.

"The Traveler's," said I. "It's about the best of the big clubs, isn't it? And it has as members most of the men I do business with and most of those I want to get into touch with."

He laughed. "It can't be done."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Oh—I don't know. You see—the fact is—well, they're a lot of old fogies up there. You don't want to bother with that push, Matt. Take my advice. Do business with them, but avoid them socially."

"I want to go in there," I insisted. "I have my own reasons. You put me up."

"I tell you, it'd be no use," he replied, in a tone that implied he wished to hear no more of the matter.

"You put me up," I repeated. "And if you do your best, I'll get in all right. I've got lots of friends there. And you've got three relatives in the committee on membership."

At this he gave me a queer, sharp look—a little fright in it.

I laughed. "You see, I've been looking into it, Sam. I never take a jump till I've measured it."

"You'd better wait a few years, until—" he began, then stopped and turned red.

"Until what?" said I. "I want you to speak frankly."

"Well, you've got a lot of enemies—a lot of fellows who've lost money in deals you've engineered. And they'd say all sorts of things."

"I'll take care of that," said I, quite easy in mind. "Mowbray Langdon's president, isn't he? Well, he's my closest friend." I spoke quite honestly. It shows how simple-minded I was in certain ways that I had never once noted the important circumstance that this "closest friend" had never invited me to his house, or anywhere where I'd meet his uptown associates at introducing distance.

Sam looked surprised. "Oh, in that case," he said, "I'll see what can be done." But his tone was not quite cordial enough to satisfy me.

To stimulate him and to give him an earnest of what I intended to do for him, when our little social deal had been put through, I showed him how he could win ten thousand dollars in the next three days. "And you needn't bother about putting up margins," said I, as I often had before. "I'll take care of that."

He stammered a refusal and went out; but he came back within an hour and, in a strained sort of way, accepted my tip and my offer.

"That's sensible," said I. "When will you attend to the matter at the Traveler's? I want to be warned so I can pull my own set of wires in concert."

"I'll let you know," he answered, hanging his head. I didn't understand his queer actions then. Though I was an expert in finance, I hadn't yet made a study of that other game—the game of "gentleman." And I didn't know how seriously the frauds and fakirs that play it take it and themselves. I at-

tributed his confusion to a ridiculous mock modesty he had about accepting favors; it struck me as being particularly silly on this occasion, because for once he was to give as well as to take.

He didn't call for his profits, but wrote asking me to mail him the check for them. I did so, putting in the envelope with it a little jog to his memory on the club matter. I didn't see him again for nearly a month; and though I searched and sent, I couldn't get his trail. On opening day at Morris Park, I was going along the passage behind the boxes in the grand stand, on my way to the paddock. I wanted to see my horse that was about to run for the Salmagundi Sweepstakes, and to tell my jockey that I'd give him fifteen thousand, instead of ten thousand, if he won—for I had put quite a bunch down. I was a figure at the tracks in those days. I went into racing on my customary generous scale. I liked horses, just as I liked everything that belonged out under the big blue sky; also I liked the advertising my string of thoroughbreds gave me. I was rich enough to be beyond the stage at which a man excites suspicion by frequenting race tracks and gambling houses; I was at the height where prodigalities begin to be taken as evidences of abounding superfluity, not of a dangerous profligacy. Jim Harkaway, who failed at playing the same game I played and won, said to me with a sneer one day: "You certainly do know how to get a dollar's worth of notoriety out of a dollar's worth of advertising."

"If I only knew that, Jim," said I, "I'd have been long ago where you're bound for. The trick is to get it back ten for one. The more you advertise yourself, the more suspicious of you people become. The more money I 'throw away' in advertising, the more convinced people are that I can afford to do it."

But, as I was about to say, in one of the boxes I spied my shy friend, Sammy. He was looking better than I had ever seen him look. Less heavy-eyed, less pallid and pasty, less like a man who had been shirking bed and

keeping up on cocktails and cold baths. He was at the rear of the box, talking with a lady and a gentleman. As soon as I saw that lady, I knew what it was that had been hiding at the bottom of my mind and rankling there.

Luckily I was alone; ever since that lurch I had been cutting loose from the old crowd—from all the women, and from all the men, except two or three real friends who were good fellows straight through, in spite of their having made the mistake of crossing the dead line between amateur "sport" and professional. I leaned over and tapped Sammy on the shoulder.

He glanced round, and when he saw me, looked as if I were a policeman who had caught him in the act.

"Howdy, Sam?" said I. "It's been so long since I've seen you that I couldn't resist the temptation to interrupt. Hope your friends'll excuse me. Howdy do, Miss Ellersly?" And I put out my hand.

She took it reluctantly. She was giving me a very unpleasant look—as if she were seeing, not somebody, but some *thing* she didn't care to see, or were seeing nothing at all. I liked that look; I liked the woman who had it in her to give it. She made me feel that she was difficult and therefore worth while, and that's what all we human beings are in business for—to make each other feel that we're worth while.

"Just a moment," said Sam, red as a cranberry and stuttering. And he made a motion to come out of the box and join me. At the same time Miss Anita and the other fellow began to turn away.

But I was not the man to be cheated in that fashion. I wanted to see *her*, and I compelled her to see it and to feel it. "Don't let me take you from your friends," said I to Sammy. "Perhaps they'd like to come with you and me down to look at my horse. I can give you a good tip—he's bound to win. I've had my boys out on the rails every morning at the trials of all the other possibilities. None of 'em's in it with Mowghli."

"Mowghli!" said the young lady—

she had begun to turn toward me as soon as I spoke the magic word, "tip." There may be men who can resist that word "tip" at the race track, but there never was a woman.

"My sister has to stay here," said Sammy, hurriedly. "I'll go with you, Blacklock."

All this time he was looking as if he were doing something he ought to be ashamed of. I thought then he was ashamed because he, professing to be a gentleman, had been neglecting his debt of honor. I now know he was ashamed because he was responsible for his sister's being contaminated by contact with such a man as I! I who hadn't a dollar that wasn't honestly earned; I who had made a fortune by my own efforts, and was spending my millions like a prince; I who had the best of taste in art and music and in architecture and furnishing and all the fine things of life. Above all, I who had been his friend and benefactor. *He* knew I was a gentleman, more of a gentleman than he could ever hope to be, he with no ability at anything but spending money; he a sponge and a cadger, yes, and a welcher—for wasn't he doing his best to welch me? But just because a lot of his friends, jealous of my success and angry that I refused to truckle to them, and be like them instead of like myself, sneered at me—behind my back—this poor-spirited creature was daring to pretend to himself that I wasn't fit for the society of his sister!

"Mowghli!" said Miss Ellersly. "What a quaint name!"

"My trainer gave it," said I. "I've got a second son of one of those broken-down English noblemen at the head of my stables. He's trying to get money enough together to be able to show up at Newport and take a shy at an heir-ess."

At this the fellow who was fourth in our party, and who had been giving me a nasty, glassy stare, got as red as was Sammy. Then I noticed that he was an Englishman, and I all but chuckled with delight. However, I said, "No offense intended," and clapped him on the shoulder with a friendly smile.



"He's a good fellow, my man Monson, and knows a lot about horses."

Miss Ellersly bit her lip and colored. I knew I had offended her; but I noticed also that her eyes were dancing.

Sam introduced the Englishman to me—Lord Somebody-or-other, I forget what, as I never saw him again. I turned like a bulldog from a toy terrier and was at Miss Ellersly again. "Let me put a little something on Mowgli for you," said I. "You're bound to win—and I'll see that you don't lose. I know how you ladies hate to lose."

That was a bit stiff, as I know well enough now. Indeed, my instinct would have told me better then, if I hadn't been so used to the sort of women that jump at such an offer, and if I hadn't been casting about so desperately and in such confusion for some way to please her. At any rate, I hardly deserved her sudden frozen look. "I beg pardon," I stammered, and I think my look at her must have been humble—for me.

The others in the box were staring round at us. "Come on," cried Sam, dragging at my arm, "let's go."

"Won't you come?" I said to his sister. I shouldn't have been able to keep my state of mind out of my voice, if I had tried. And I didn't try.

Trust the right sort of woman to see the right sort of thing in a man through any and all kinds of barriers of caste and manners and breeding. Her voice was much softer as she said: "I think I must stay here. Thank you, just the same."

As soon as Sam and I were alone, I apologized. "I hope you'll tell your sister I'm sorry for that break," said I.

"Oh, that's all right," he answered, easy again, now that we were away from the others. "You meant well—and motive's the thing."

"Motive—hell!" said I, in my anger at myself. "Nobody but a man's God knows his motives; he doesn't even know them himself. I judge others by what they do, and I expect to be judged in the same way. I see I've got a lot to learn." Then I remembered the Traveler's Club, and asked him what he'd done about it.

"I—I've been—thinking it over," said he. "Are you *sure* you want to run the risk of an ugly cropper, Matt?"

I turned him round so that we were facing each other. "Do you want to do me that favor, or don't you?" I demanded.

"I'll do whatever you say," he replied. "I'm thinking only of your interests."

"Let *me* take care of *them*," said I. "You put me up at that club to-morrow. I'll send you the name of a seconder not later than noon."

"Up goes your name," he said. "But don't blame me for the consequences."

And my name went up, with Mowbray Langdon's cousin, Tom, as seconder. Every newspaper in town published the fact, most of them under big black headlines. "The fun's about to begin," thought I, as I read. And I was right, though I then hadn't the remotest idea how big a ball I had opened.

### III.

At that time I did not myself go over the bills before the legislatures of those States in which I had interests. I trusted that work to my lawyers—and, like every man who ever absolutely trusted an important division of his affairs to another, I was severely punished. One morning my eye happened to light upon a minor paragraph in a newspaper—a list of the "small bills yesterday approved by the governor." In the list was one "defining the power of sundry commissions." Those words seemed to me somehow to spell "joker." But why did I call up my lawyers to ask them about it? It's a mystery to me. All I know is that, busy as I was, something inside me compelled me to drop everything else and hunt that "joker" down.

I got Saxe—then senior partner in Browne, Saxe & Einstein—on the 'phone, and said: "Just see and tell me, will you, what is the bill defining the power of sundry commissions—the bill the governor signed yesterday?"

"Certainly, Mr. Blacklock," came the answer. My nerves are, and always have been, on the watchout for the looks and the tones and the gestures that are

just a shade off the natural; and I feel that I do Saxe no injustice when I say his tone was, not a shade but a whole color, off the natural. So I was prepared for what he said when he returned to the telephone. "I'm sorry, Mr. Blacklock, but we seem unable to lay our hands on that bill at this moment."

"Why not?" said I, in the tone that makes an employee jump as if a whip lash had cut him on the calves.

He had jumped all right, as his voice showed. "It's not in our file," said he. "It's House Bill No. 427, and it's apparently not here."

"The hell you say!" I exclaimed. "Why?"

"I really can't explain," he pleaded, and the frightened whine of his tone confirmed my suspicion.

"I guess not," said I, making the words significant and suggestive. "And you're in my pay to look after such matters! But you'll have to explain, if this turns out to be serious."

"Apparently our file of bills is complete except that one," he went on. "I suppose it was lost in the mail, and I very stupidly didn't notice the gap in the numbers."

"Stupid isn't the word I'd use," said I, with a laugh that wasn't of the kind that cheers. And I rang off and asked for the State Capitol on the "long distance."

Before I got my connection Saxe, whose office was only two blocks away, came flustering in. "The boy has been discharged, Mr. Blacklock," he began.

"What boy?" said I.

"The boy in charge of the bill file—the boy whose business it was to keep the file complete."

"Send him to me, you—scoundrel," said I. "I'll give him a job. What do you take me for, anyway? And what kind of a cowardly hound are you to disgrace an innocent boy as a cover for your own crooked work?"

"Really, Mr. Blacklock, this is most extraordinary," he expostulated.

"Extraordinary? I call it criminal," retorted I. "Listen to me. You look after the legislation calendars for me,

and for Langdon, and for Roebuck, and for Melville, and for half a dozen others of the biggest financiers in the country. It's the most important work you do for us. Yet you, as shrewd and careful a lawyer as there is at the bar, want me to believe you trusted that work to a boy! If you did, you're a damn fool. If you didn't, you're a damn scoundrel. There's no more doubt in my mind than in yours which of those horns has you sticking on it."

"You are letting your quick temper get away with you, Mr. Blacklock," he deprecated.

"Stop lying!" I shouted. "I knew you had been doing some skulduggery when I first heard your voice on the telephone. And if I needed any proof, the meek way you've taken my abuse would furnish it, and to spare."

Just then the telephone bell rang and I got the right department and asked the clerk to read House Bill 427. It contained five short paragraphs. The "joker" was in the third, which gave the State Canal Commission the right "to institute condemnation proceedings, and to condemn, and to abolish, any canal not exceeding thirty miles in length and not a part of the connected canal system of the State."

When I hung up the receiver I was so absorbed that I had forgotten Saxe was waiting. He made some slight sound. I wheeled on him. I needed a vent. If he hadn't been there I should have smashed a chair. But there was he—and I kicked him out of my private office and would have kicked him out through the anteroom into the outer hall, had he not gathered himself together and run like a jack rabbit.

Since that day I have done my own calendar watching.

By this incident I do not mean to suggest that there are not honorable men in the legal profession. Most of them are men of the highest honor, as are most business men, most persons of consequence in every department of life. But you don't look for character in the proprietors, servants, customers and hangers-on of dives. No more ought you to look for honor among any

of the people that have to do with the big gilded dive of the dollarocracy. They are there to gamble, and to prostitute themselves. The fact that they look like gentlemen and have the manners and the language of gentlemen ought to deceive nobody but the callow chaps of the sort that believes the swell gambler is "an honest fellow" and a "perfect gentleman otherwise," because he wears a dress suit in the evening and is a judge of books and pictures. Lawyers are the doorkeepers and the messengers of the big dive; and these lawyers, though they stand the highest and get the biggest fees, are just what you would expect human beings to be who expose themselves to such temptations, and yield whenever they get an opportunity, as eager and as compliant as a cocotte.

My lawyers had sold me out; I, fool that I was, had not guarded the only weak point in my armor against my companions—the armor over my back, to shed assassin thrusts. Roebuck and Langdon between them owned the governor; he owned the Canal Commission; my canal, which gave me access to tidewater for the product of my mines, was as good as closed. I no longer had the whip hand in National Coal. The others could sell me out and take two-thirds of my fortune, whenever they liked—for of what use were my mines with no outlet now to any market, except the outlets the coal crowd owned?

As soon as I had thought the situation out in all its bearings, I realized that there was no escape for me now, that whatever chance to escape I might have had was closed by my uncovering to Saxe and kicking him. But I did not regret; it was worth the money it would cost me. Besides, I thought I saw how I could later on turn it to good account. A sensible man never makes mistakes. Whatever he does is at least experience, and can also be used to advantage. If Napoleon hadn't been half dead at Waterloo, I don't doubt he would have used its disaster as a means to a greater victory.

Was I downcast by the discovery that

those bandits had me apparently at their mercy? Not a bit. Never in my life have I been downcast more than a few minutes. Why should I be? Why should any man be who has made himself all that he is? As long as his brain is sound, his capital is unimpaired. When I walked into Mowbray Langdon's office, I was like a thoroughbred exercising on a clear, frosty morning; and my smile was as fresh as the flower in my buttonhole. I thrust out my hand at him. "I congratulate you," said I.

He took the hand with a questioning look. "On what?" said he. It is hard to tell from his face what is going on in his head, but I think I guessed right when I decided that Saxe hadn't yet warned him.

"I have just found out from Saxe," I pursued, "about the Canal Bill."

"What canal bill?" he asked.

"That puzzled look was a mistake, Langdon," said I, laughing at him. "When you don't know anything about a matter, you always look blank. You overdid it; you've given yourself away."

He shrugged his shoulders. "As you please," said he. As you please was his favorite expression; it must have been a stereotyped irony, for in dealing with him, things were never as you pleased, but always as he pleased.

"Next time you want to dig a mine under anybody," I went on, "don't hire Saxe. Really I feel sorry for you—to have such a clever scheme messed by such an ass."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to know what you're talking about," said he, with his patient, bored look.

"As you and Roebuck own the governor," said I, "I know your little law ends my little canal."

"Still I don't know what you're talking about," drawled he. "You are always suspecting everybody of double dealing. I gather that this is another instance of your infirmity. Really, Blacklock, the world isn't wholly made up of scoundrels."

"I know that," said I. "And I will even admit that its scoundrels are seldom made up wholly of scoundrelism. Even Roebuck would rather do the de-

cent thing, if he can do it without endangering his personal interests. As for you—I regard you as one of the decentest men I ever knew—outside of business. And even there, I believe you'd keep your word, as long as the other fellow kept his."

"Thank you," said he, bowing ironically. "This flattery makes me suspect you've come to get something."

"On the contrary," said I. "I want to give something. I want to give you my coal mines."

"I thought you'd see that our offer was fair," said he. "And I'm glad you have changed your mind about quarreling with your best friends. We can be useful to you, you to us. A break would be silly."

"That's the way it looks to me," I assented. And I decided that my sharp talk had set them to estimating my real value to them.

"Sam Ellersly," he presently remarked, "tells me he's campaigning hard for you at the Traveler's. I hope you'll make it. We're rather a slow crowd; a few men like you might stir things up."

I am always more than willing to give others credit for good sense and good motives. It was not vanity, but this disposition to credit others with sincerity and sense, that led me to believe him, both as to the Coal matter and as to the Traveler's Club. "Thanks, Langdon," I said. "I want to get into that club much as the winner of a race wants the medal that belongs to him. I've built myself up into a rich man, into one of the powers in finance, and I feel I'm entitled to recognition."

"I don't quite follow you," he said. "I can't see that you'll be either better or worse for getting into that club."

"No more I shall," replied I. "No more is the winner of the race the better or the worse for having the medal. But he wants it."

He had a queer expression. I suppose he regarded it as a joke, my attaching apparently so much importance to a thing he cared nothing about. "You've always had that sort of thing," said I, "and so you don't appreciate it.

You're like a respectable woman. She can't imagine what all the fuss over women keeping a good reputation is about. Well, just let her lose it!"

"Perhaps," said he.

"And," I went on, "you can have the rule about the waiting list suspended, and can move me up and get me in at once."

"We don't do things in quite such a hurry at the Traveler's," said he, laughing. "However, we'll try to comply with your commands."

His generous, cordial offer made me half ashamed of the plot I had underneath my submission about the coal mines—a plot to get into the coal combine in order to gather the means to destroy it, and perhaps reconstruct it with myself in control. I made up my mind that, if he continued to act squarely, I would alter those plans.

"If you don't mind," Langdon was going on, "I'll make a suggestion—merely a suggestion. It might not be a bad idea for you to arrange to—to eliminate some of the—the popular features from your—brokerage business. There are several influential members of the Traveler's who have a—a prejudice—"

"I understand," I interposed, to spare him the necessity of saying things he thought I might regard as impertinent. "They look on me as a keeper of a high-class bucket shop."

"That's about the way they'd put it," he admitted.

"But the things they object to are, unfortunately, my 'strong hold,'" I explained. "You other big fellows gather in the big investors by simply announcing your projects in a dignified way. I haven't got the ear of that class of people. I have to send out my letters, have to advertise in all the cities and towns, have to catch the little fellows. You can afford to send out engraved invitations; I have to gather in my people with brass bands and megaphones. Don't forget that my people count in the totals bigger than yours. And what's my chief value to you? Why, when you want to unload, I furnish the crowd to unload on, the crowd that

gives you and your big customers cash for your water and wind. I don't see my way to letting go of what I've got until I get hold of what I'm reaching for." All this with not a suspicion in my mind that he was at the same game that had caused Roebuck to "hint" the same proposal. What a "con man" high finance got when Mowbray Langdon became active downtown!

"That's true," he admitted, with a great air of frankness. "But the cry that you're not a financier, but a bucket-shop man, might be fatal at the Traveler's. Of course, the sacrifice would be too great for you to make for such a small object. Still, you might have to make it—if you really want to get into the Traveler's."

"I'll think it over," said I. He thought I meant that I'd think over dropping my power—thought I was as big a snob as he and his friends of the Traveler's, willing to make any sacrifice to be "in the push." But, while Matthew Blacklock has the streak of snob in him that's natural to all human beings and to most animals, he is not quite insane. No, the thing I intended to think over was how to stay in the "bucket-shop" business, but wash myself of its odium. Bucket shop! What snobbery! Yet it's human nature, too. The wholesale merchant looks down on the retailer, the big retailer on the little; the burglar despises the pickpocket, the financier the small promoter, the man who works with his brain the man who works with his hands. A silly lot we are—silly to look down, sillier to feel badly when we're looked down upon.

When I got back to my office and was settling down to the proofs of my "Letter to Investors," which I then published in sixty newspapers throughout the country and which daily reached upward of five million people, Sam Ellersly came in. His manner was certainly different from what it had ever been before; the difference was so subtle that I couldn't describe it more nearly than to say it made me feel as if he had not until then been treating me as an equal, or at least as of the same class

with himself. I smiled to myself and made an entry in my mental ledger to the credit of Mowbray Langdon.

"That club business is going nicely," said Sam. "Langdon is enthusiastic, and I find you've got several friends on the committee."

I knew that well enough. Hadn't I been carrying them on my books at a good round loss for two years?

"If it wasn't for—for some features of this business of yours," he went on, "I'd say there wouldn't be the slightest trouble."

"Bucket shop?" said I, with an easy laugh, though this nagging was beginning to get on my nerves.

"Exactly," said he. "And, you know, you advertise yourself like—like—"

"Like everybody else, only more successfully than most," said I. "Everybody advertises, each one adapting his advertising to the needs of his enterprises, as far as he knows how."

"That's true enough," he confessed. "But there are enterprises and enterprises, you know."

"You can tell 'em, Sam," said I, "that I never put out a statement I don't believe to be true, and that when any of my followers loses on one of my tips, I've lost on it, too. For I play heavy on every one of my own tips—and that's more than can be said of any 'financier' in this town."

"It'd be no use to tell 'em that," said he, with a grin. "Character's something of a consideration in social matters, of course. But it isn't the chief consideration by a long shot, and the absence of it isn't necessarily fatal."

"I'm the biggest single operator in the country," I went on, "and it's my methods that make me a success—because I know how to advertise—how to keep my name before the country, and how to make men say, whenever they hear it: 'There's a shrewd, honest fellow.' That and the people it brings me, in flocks, are my stock in trade. Honesty's a bluff with most of the big respectables; under cover of their respectability, of their 'old and honored names,' of their social connections, of

their churchgoing and that, they do all sorts of queer work."

"To hear you talk, one would think you didn't shove off millions of dollars of suspicious stuff on the public through those damn clever letters of yours."

"There's where you didn't stop to think, Sam," said I. "When I say a stock's going to rise, it rises. When I stop talking about it, it may go on rising or it may fall. But I never advise anybody to buy except when I have every reason to believe it's a good thing. If they hold on too long, that's their own lookout."

"But they invest—"

"You use words too carelessly," I said. "When I say buy, I don't mean *invest*. When I mean invest, I say *invest*." There I laughed. "It's a word I don't often use."

"And that's what you call honesty!" said he, with a grin.

"That's what I call honesty," said I. "And that *is* honesty."

"Well—every man has a right to his own notion of what's honest," he said. "But no man's got a right to complain if a fellow with a different notion criticises him."

"None in the world," said I. "Do you criticise me?"

"No, no, no, indeed," he answered, nervous, and taking seriously what I had intended as a joke.

After a while I brought up the subject that was now as near my heart as the Traveler's Club. "One thing I can and will do to get myself in line for that club," I said. "I'm sick of the crowd I travel with—the men and the women. I feel it's about time I settled down. I've got a fortune and establishment that needs a woman, to set it off. I can make some woman happy. You don't happen to know any nice girls—the right sort, I mean?"

"Not many," said Sam. "You'd better go back to the country where you came from, and get her there. She'd be eternally grateful, and her head wouldn't be full of mercenary nonsense."

"Excuse me!" said I. "It'd turn her head. She'd go clean crazy. She'd

plunge in up to her neck—and not being used to swimming in these waters, she'd make a holy show of herself, and probably drown, dragging me down with her, if possible."

Sam laughed. "Keep out of marriage, Matt," he advised. "I know the kind of girl you've got in mind. She'd marry you only for your money, and she'd never appreciate you. She'd see in you only the lack of the things she's been taught to lay stress on."

"For instance?"

"I couldn't tell you any more than I could enable you to recognize a person you'd never seen by describing him."

"Ain't I a gentleman?" I inquired.

He laughed, as if the idea tickled him. "Of course," he said. "Of course."

"Ain't I got as fine and tasteful a country place as there is a-going? Ain't my apartment in the Willoughby a peach? Don't I give as elegant dinners as you ever sat down to? Don't I dress right up to the Piccadilly latest? Don't I act all right—know enough to keep my feet off the table and my knife out of my mouth?"

"You're right in it, Matt," said he. "But—well—you haven't traveled with our crowd, and they're shy of strangers, especially as—as energetic a sort of stranger as you are. You're too sudden, Matt—too dazzling—too—"

"Too shiny and new?" said I, beginning to catch his drift. "That'll be looked after. What I want is you to take me round a bit."

"I can't ask you to people's houses," protested he, knowing I'd not realize what a flimsy pretense that was.

While we were talking I had been thinking—working out the proposition along lines he had indicated to me without knowing it. "Look here, Sam," I said. "You think I'm trying to butt in and go with a lot of people that don't know me and don't want to know me. But that ain't my point of view. Those people can be useful to me. I need 'em. What do I care whether they want to be useful to me or not? The machine'd have run down and rusted out long ago if your idea of a gentleman had been



taken seriously by anybody who had anything to do and knew how to do it. In this world you've got to *make* people do what's for your good and their own. Your idea of a gentleman was put forward by a lot of cheap, lazy fakirs who were living off what their ungentlemanly ancestors had annexed, and who didn't want to be disturbed. So they 'fixed' the game by passing these rules you and your kind are fools enough to abide by—that is, you are fools, unless you haven't got brains enough to get on in a free-and-fair-for-all."

Sam laughed. "There's a lot of truth in what you say," he admitted.

"However," I went on, "my plans don't call for hurry just there. When I get ready to go round, I'll let you know."

#### IV.

This brings me to the ugliest story my enemies have concocted against me. No one appreciates more thoroughly than I that, to rise high, a man must have his own efforts seconded by the flood of vituperation which his enemies send to overwhelm him, and which washes him far higher than he could hope to lift himself. So I do not here refer to any attack on me in the public prints; I think of them only with amusement and gratitude. The story that rankles is the one these foes of mine set creeping, like a snake under the fallen leaves, everywhere, anywhere, unseen, without a trail. It has been whispered into every ear—and it is, no doubt, widely believed—that I deliberately put old Bromwell Ellersly "in a hole," and there tortured him until he consented to try to compel his daughter to marry me.

It is possible that, if I had thought of such a devilish device, I might have tried it—is not all fair in love? But there was no need for my cudgeling my brains to carry that particular fortification on my way to what I had fixed my will upon. *Bromwell Ellersly came to me of his own accord.* I suppose the Ellerslys must have talked me over in the family circle. However this may

be, my acquaintance with her father began with Sam's asking me to lunch with him. "The governor has heard me talk of you so much," said he, "that he is anxious to meet you."

I found him a dried-up, conventional old gentleman, very proud of his ancestors, none of whom I had ever heard of, and very positive that a great deal of deference was due him—though on what grounds I could not then, and cannot now, make out. I soon discovered that it was the scent of my stock-tip generosity, wafted to him by Sammy, that had put him hot upon my trail. I hadn't gone far into his affairs before I learned that he had been speculating, mortgaging, kiting notes, doing what he called, and thought, "business" on a large scale. He regarded business as beneath the dignity and the intellect of a "gentleman"—how my gorge does rise at that word! So he put his great mind on it only for a few hours now and then; he reserved the rest of his time for what he regarded as the proper concerns of a gentleman—attending to social "duties," reading pretentious books, looking at the pictures and listening to the music that had been decreed fashionable.

They charge that I put him "in a hole." In fact, I found him at the bottom of a deep pit he had dug for himself; and when he first met me he was, without having the sense to realize it, just about to go smash, with not a penny for his old age. As soon as I had got this fact clear of the tangle, I showed it to him.

"My God, what is to become of *me*?" he said. That was his only thought—not, what is to become of my wife and daughter; but, what is to become of "*me*!" I do not blame him for this. Naturally enough, people who have always been used to everything become, unconsciously, monsters of egotism and selfishness, the while imagining themselves liberal and generous because they give away occasionally something which costs them, at most, nothing more serious than the foregoing of some extravagant luxury or other. I recite his remark simply to show what manner of

...he was, what sort of creature I had to deal with.

I offered to help him, and I did help him. Is there anyone, knowing anything of the facts of life, who will censure me when I admit that I—with deliberation—simply tided him over, did not make for him and present to him a fortune? What chance should I have had, if I had been so absurdly generous to a man who deserved nothing but punishment for his selfish and bigoted mode of life? I took away his worst burdens; but I left him more than he could carry without my help. And it was not until he had appealed in vain to all his social friends to relieve him of the necessity of my aid, not until he realized that I was his only hope of escape from a sharp come-down from luxury to very modest comfort in a flat somewhere—not until then did he make his wife send me an invitation to dinner. And, on my honor, I had not asked him for it, had not so much as hinted that I wanted it.

I shall never forget the smallest detail of that dinner—it was a purely "family" affair—only the Ellerslys and me. I can feel now the oppressive at-

mosphere, the look as of impending sacrilege upon the faces of the old servants; I can see Mrs. Ellersly trying to condescend to be gracious, and treating me as if I were some sort of museum freak or menagerie exhibit. I can see Anita. She was like a statue of snow; she spoke not a word; if she lifted her eyes, I failed to note it. And when I was leaving—I with my collar wilted from the fierce, nervous strain I had been enduring—Mrs. Ellersly, in that voice of hers into which I don't believe any shade of a real human emotion ever penetrated, said: "You must come to see us, Mr. Blacklock. We are always at home after five."

I looked at Miss Ellersly. She was white even to her lips now, and the spangles on her white dress seemed bits of ice glittering there. She said nothing; but I knew she felt my look, and that it froze the ice the more closely in around her heart. "Thank you," I muttered.

I stumbled in the hall; I almost fell down the broad steps. I stopped at the first bar and took three drinks in quick succession. I went on down the avenue, breathing like an exhausted swimmer.

TO BE CONTINUED.



## SEPARATION

"TILL death us do part,  
Ever true to remain,"  
To the new-plighted heart  
Was a whisper of pain.

For the soul cannot die;  
And the life that is fled  
Waits, widowed as I,  
Until death us do wed.

JOHN B. TARR.



# STRANGE DRAMATIC INFLUENCES

BY ALAN DALE

*Rejane in decadent French drama. Mrs. Fiske's mannerisms. Sir Charles Wyndham in an old and a new play. The favorites of a past generation. Miss Mary Moore's narrow escape from unpopularity. Many other features of the season*



**M**ADAME GABRIELLE REJANE, with a garish collection of paprika-sprinkled "comedies," came, saw and conquered. The erotic fruit of ten Paris seasons, accumulated at compound interest, was gracefully let loose in our midst, while a pious management, sapiently aware that these luxuries must come high, "raised the prices," and thus made a successful appeal to "society." Réjane, inimitable comedienne, who told me in Paris last summer that she hoped to cater to the "young American miss," evidently forgot those gentle aspirations.

While Réjane was diffusing the decadent glow of the perverse French dramatists at the Lyric Theater, Mrs. Fiske, at the Manhattan, was working diligently in the interests of the Norwegian malcontent, Ibsen. Between them, this perplexed metropolis, torn 'mid conflicting influences, might have echoed the words of the English comic song, "E dunno where 'e are." With France dallying farcically with conjugal infidelity in Forty-second Street, and Norway blazoning it forth tragically at Thirty-third Street, one wondered where the happy medium came in. Perhaps at about Thirty-eighth Street we

might have looked for a normal condition.

Strange influences indeed! Although the American stage is no longer the simple, unsophisticated, clinging thing that can be swung in any direction, it must naturally feel in some subtle way the effect of these varied influences. As in the "Arabian Nights" story, the monster issued from the bottle in the form of vapor, assuming shape gradually, so in the case of the liberation of these dramatic gases must we wait until the shape materializes.

Of course, French influence is not what it used to be. It is not what it used to be even in—France. There was a time when London danced to the tune that Paris played, and New York reveled in the imported jig. The analytic Augustin Filon, in his comments on the English stage, has this to say: "The way in which the English used to imitate our pieces half a century ago resembled the hasty procedure of a band of thieves plundering a house, doing their utmost, but against time and without method; and in consequence burdening themselves with worthless knickknacks, and overlooking jewels of price. When the London managers came to Paris posthaste, vying with each other for our manuscripts, and resorting to every sort of dodge to secure the prize, it was sometimes but the potentiality of becoming bankrupt that was held up, as it were, to auction."

Réjane stayed four weeks at the

Lyric Theater, and gave us a motley repertoire. The moral of the plays she produced was this: the marriage bond, like the pie crust, is made to be broken. The pulverization of the seventh commandment was the theme of nearly all her plays, because it is the only topic that seems to inspire the decadent literary man of France. To us, it appears odd. I may add that it will probably continue to do so.

Even when a French playwright or novelist yearns to be romantic, or pathetic, his heroine is invariably the young married woman, who "takes a lover." The inference is that she marries in order to do so. In case she has children—a rare and generally vetoed incident—the French playwright nobly permits her to be a good mother, in the midst of her infidelities! Farce, drama, comedy, melodrama are all keyed to the same noxious pitch. The young girl is merely a type that is ripening for all this.

It was amusing to watch the audiences at the Lyric. Had the plays been produced in English, there would have been a rush from the theater, for some of them were, honestly, too abject for even the broadest-minded to contemplate serenely. The French language covered a multitude of iniquities. The people bought "books of the play" and got a vague idea what they were seeing, and when they recognized a "conversation book" phrase, they were satisfied. They thought Réjane adorable when they fathomed such utterances as "*Je t'aime*," or "*Asseyez vous, madame*," or "*Fermez la porte, monsieur*." These gems of succinct thought came out well, and were quite worth the little tax of three dollars per seat.

However, the delightful art of Réjane herself emerged beautifully from the miasma of her plays. It is the art of the splendidly "finished" comedienne, with a thousand dainty tricks at her fingers' ends, and an exquisite gift of pantomime. Although the French actress has lost a good deal of her freshness, every lover of the artistic quality realized the beauty of her work.

Yet twice she came to grief when

she played parts that she herself had created, but that we had seen enacted by an American and an English actress, respectively. She put on "*Zaza*" for one week, just to show us, don't you know, how that drama should be played. She yearned to give us the real thing, in the apparent belief that, at the hands of Mrs. Leslie Carter, we had received but the imitation.

In the case of "*Zaza*," Réjane was hoist by her own petard. Our allegiance to Mrs. Leslie Carter never swerved. The American actress took Réjane's *Zaza* and smashed it. In its place, she reared up the magnificent impersonation that every playgoer knows so well. Réjane, who is nothing more than a comedienne—which should be enough for any mortal—compared very badly with Mrs. Carter's emotional inspiration. "*Zaza*," in French, was a coarse, unsympathetic picture, true, perhaps, to Parisian life—which we don't want, and won't have here.

It was very similar in the case of "*La Passerelle*." That was given to us in English by Miss Marie Tempest, under the name of "*The Marriage of Kitty*," and again Réjane had to take down the tricolor—this time to the Union Jack. Little Miss Tempest's buoyant personality and keen intelligence were irresistibly, immeasurably superior to anything that Réjane offered. Moreover, "*La Passerelle*," which is disgusting in French, had not suffered from its chloride-of-lime bath. On the contrary, it had been materially strengthened.

After these failures, Réjane was on her mettle. She succeeded in the lighter comedies through which she could frivol. It was in "*Ma Cousine*" and "*La Petite Marquise*" that she won. Shady though these comedies be, they at least gave the French artist her chance, and they drew "all New York." If Réjane had played them in Sanskrit, she would have been just as delicious—perhaps more so—because we could then have imagined a good deal that, in French, we were unfortunately obliged to know.

Her engagement ended with the long-suffering "*Camille*"—a lady who posi-

tively refuses to extinguish herself. "Camille" is a sort of hurdle, over which every actress freighted with "emotional power" feels impelled to vault. It generally throws her, but she doesn't mind. She is up and at it again. The public does not care for "Camille," and has little sympathy for its maudlin and perverted heroics. But the actress who can afford to treat herself to it does so regardless of expense. Just as you might buy yourself an automobile, if you had the wherewithal, so the "star" actress invests in the luxury of "Camille." In the case of Réjane, the play served to show once more what an excellent comedienne she is. We already knew it.

The "Réjane season" was a very profitable one. Its influence will materialize anon. These influences break out like measles, when you don't expect them. Their period of incubation has no cast-iron limits. Also, like measles, they are better "out" than "in."

To the practical minds of young, aspiring people, to whom there are other things in life than sex, the pitiful waste of an admirable actress upon the set of loathsome plays that Réjane gave us seemed most emphatic. It was genius, squinting; it was talent, turned in against itself. What this woman might have achieved in high comedy, of a sane and intellectual order, can only be imagined. Even in Paris, her influence might have been beneficent and enduring. But Réjane, catering to a people whose modern literature harps on one eternal theme, to the point of nausea, has seldom emerged from the one groove.

Mrs. Fiske played "Hedda Gabler" for three weeks at the Manhattan Theater. That circumstance is so unusual, and so pregnant with significance, that, though her *Hedda* was not a novelty, one cannot let the event pass unrecorded. "Hedda Gabler" is a kink in femininity, and it was the abnormality of the character that captured New York. Guy de Maupassant, in one of his Poe-like stories, tells of a woman whose children were all monsters, which she sold to passing "show men."

She had nearly a dozen of them, and she grew rich and prosperous.

There is always a public willing to countenance monsters. Sometimes it is the two-headed lady in the museums of Fourteenth Street; again it is the "subtle" Ibsen creations, generally launched tentatively at a *matinée*. The Ibsen heroines are, however, merely mental monsters, with their mental limbs awry. Abstruse meanings are read into them, and hundreds of people, tired of lisping *ingénues*, or drawing-room dowagers, go to see them.

The revulsion in favor of Ibsen is striking. It is due to fatigue. It is the note sounded by a moment of aberration. Critics misled by appearances, and watching the seeming growth of the Ibsen vogue, now make no bones about applauding it. They have been driven to the conclusion that Ibsen is inevitable. In fact, a foreign critic has declared that if Shakespeare were alive to-day, he would give us the Ibsen drama! Could any statement more grotesque be submitted?

So Mrs. Fiske offered us three weeks of "Hedda Gabler" apparently "by request"—as the orchestra says when it plays a selection that nobody wants. The part certainly fits Mrs. Fiske, who has grown a crop of mannerisms and eccentricities almost appalling. As *Hedda*, she eats her lips, loops up her mouth, huddles up her limbs, sits all over the stage, and becomes a study in the unexpected. That is *Hedda Gabler*, if anything is.

All that the spectator has to do is to believe implicitly that each of these oddities has some hidden meaning. When Mrs. Fiske eats her lips he says: "Her mentality is working;" when she loops up her mouth he declares: "There is a psychological uprush;" when she huddles up her limbs he opines that "her spirit is twisted," and when she sits all over the stage—well, he hopes that she is tired; he is quite certain that he is.

Yet this production of "Hedda Gabler" will bear fruit. It will exert some sort of influence upon the stage. The mere popularization of Ibsen is signifi-

cant. In Mr. Lew Fields' musical comedy production of "It Happened in Nordland," Miss Marie Cahill gave us five minutes with Mrs. Fiske in "Hedda Gabler." Ibsen's "vine leaves" crept into the "musical show." To my mind, they are better there, but I do not urge this view.

In the terrific output of plays, the American drama has been virtually snuffed out. From Rejane and her bag of French tricks, and Mrs. Fiske with Ibsen, I can turn to little that is worthily American. In the great dearth of good plays, even foreign failures are imported, in a sort of desperate hope of a reversal of judgment. We got one play, "The Rich Mrs. Repton," by R. C. Carton, of London, that ran for three weeks in the English metropolis. It was dragged across the ocean—poor old thing!—brought to the Criterion Theater, and intrusted to Miss Fay Davis. It was produced one Wednesday night; it was withdrawn the following Saturday. May it rest in peace!

Miss Ethel Barrymore—one of the few dramatic pets of this metropolis—came to the Hudson Theater with a sentimental little affair called "Sunday"—an American subject dealt with by three Englishmen, bunched together under the name of Thomas Raceward. In London, Miss Julia Neilson, a beautiful, large lady, who was once seen here in "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith," played *Sunday*, a simple little Western girl with an ingenuous mind. It was one of the most ludicrous pieces of acting I have ever seen. Londoners, whose sense of humor must be dulled, apparently saw nothing incongruous in the spectacle of this stupendous lady pirouetting in arch simplicity.

Miss Barrymore was, of course, infinitely preferable. This young actress has so much individual charm, such an appealing personality, added to youth, grace and beauty, that we liked her in "Sunday" quite as much as we could have liked anybody in such a flimsy little play. She was at least convincing as the little, wild Western girl who has been brought up, amid Bret Harte surroundings, by three worthy miners, one

of whom shoots and kills an Englishman who has offered her an affront.

After that, the maiden goes to England, and falls in love with the brother of the dead man. In real life, this would not have called for any heroics. But real life is not stage life. *Sunday* and her lover have a perfectly miserable time of it, and *Sunday* will not explain matters. They never will—these stage heroines. They hate to be happy. If by carefully avoiding the utterance of three words that would set everything right, they can shed tears till 11 P. M., wild buffaloes could not drag those words from them.

"Sunday" is that kind of a play. I dare say that you know the style. Of course, we don't want to go home until supper time, and we should be indignant if a play ended at half-past nine—I know several plays that could beneficially end even before they began—but we like an artistic illusion. It is dreadful to think that three words that are never spoken could clear up a situation. Off the stage, women are not so backward. They rarely let concealment prey upon their damask cheeks. On the stage, they do so love to be absurdly reticent.

Ethel Barrymore, whose "specialty" is not emotion, managed to hold her own with some degree of success, although just at present her pathos is no inducement to weep. But even in the sentimental episodes of "Sunday" she pleased. She is a radiant young woman, not afraid of hard work. Slowly but surely she is developing into a fine actress—a fact that many of her admirers forget. It is easy to be blind in the case of Ethel Barrymore, for her personality drugs the critical faculty. If she were vain, she would be satisfied with what she now is. Luckily she is not vain, and in "Sunday" she tried to do something new, and succeeded better than most people would have imagined. Bruce McRae was her leading man, and an excellent one. "Sunday" was a mild, but not ineffective, entertainment.

Sir Charles Wyndham, with the lustre of his recent knighthood upon him,



returned to this country after an absence of a good many years, to confront a new generation, to whom he was but a name. Sir Charles found himself in an odd plight. This play-ravenous country had avidly snapped up all the successes he had made in London, and they were already old stories here. He found it necessary to open in that veritable refuge for the dramatically destitute, "David Garrick"—after which he produced a novelty that he had saved up for this tour, called "Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace."

Sir Charles proved to be very coy about his title. Like Irving, he declined to use it in connection with his dramatic art, though for the life of me I cannot imagine the object of a title, unless it be to be used. Actors have little time for social functions, for the Muse is a jealous one. It is to be presumed, therefore, that Wyndham puts on his title when he takes off his clothes, and goes to bed in it.

The program at the Lyceum Theater, however, was quite amusingly hopeless on the subject. On the night of the production of "Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace," Wyndham's name figured in the cast as "Mr." Charles Wyndham—rather a slap at His Majesty. On another page we read: "Charles Frohman presents Charles Wyndham," while yet again we gleaned that Cecil Breton was acting manager "for Sir Charles Wyndham."

These little points of etiquette are worth noting, because it is funny to realize that while "star" actors in London are frantically eager for knight-hood's honor, they don't quite know what to do with it when they get it. They suggest—to quote a French simile—a hen that has dug up a penknife.

Wyndham, who is now "getting along" in years, is an excellent actor, with a splendid, sonorous voice, a sympathetic manner, and a good deal of personal charm. Nevertheless, New York did not grow enthusiastic over "David Garrick." The elixir of youth, the secret of which the actor himself appears to have discovered, was not shared by the play. "David Garrick"

is, in good sooth, all wrinkled and bent, with scarce a leg to stand on.

The old play is a great favorite with Sir Charles—please note my respectful attitude toward his title—and has stood him in good stead. It has been the prop of his managerial career. In moments of doubt or perplexity, when new plays were lacking, he has invariably revived "David Garrick" in London, with serene success. New York, however, is quite another proposition, and the presentation of this antiquity for the opening performance was a mistake. We admired Wyndham himself; we did not appreciate his leading lady, Miss Mary Moore, a colorless, flaccid little person, who has been leading lady for very many years, because she never "led," but obsequiously followed! As for the new generation—well, it probably thought that its fathers and mothers were duffers.

I often wonder what the new generation thinks of the old one, when it goes to see actors and actresses who have been acclaimed in their day, and who live on that old reputation. The new theatergoers are dragged to see Sarah Bernhardt, "the greatest living actress," and they see a mature woman, of whose former magnificence but a suggestion remains. They are rushed to Irving, "the most famous actor on the English-speaking stage," and they behold an incoherent, almost unintelligible player, in whose methods they fail to detect virility. They are impelled to hear Patti, "world renowned," "the nightingale of the century," and they listen to the closing notes of a shriveling voice, in unconcealed amazement.

We should be careful of this new generation, and remember that the "bump of reverence" is nowadays obsolete. New theatergoers judge for themselves according to the standards of to-day. They are willing to view relics as relics, just as they will go to the Louvre to enjoy old masters as old masters. But it is silly to sing perpetually the old songs, in the belief that they are better than the new ones. As we grow older, perhaps we become slaves to tradition—that terrible tyrant. It is necessary oc-

casionally to slay the monster, and remove the obsession.

These remarks scarcely hold good in the case of Sir Charles Wyndham. The new generation may not have seen much merit in the acting of "David Garrick," but in "Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace" both Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore were delightful. It is a play from the young pen of Hubert Henry Davies, the author of "Cousin Kate" and "Cynthia." Mr. Davies seems to have broken in upon the relentless circle of fatigued London playwrights, with a novel outlook. He has no illusions on the subject of "plot," but he has an ingenuous and an amusing way of looking at things. It is a very valuable gift, because it can reach so far. The man of whom one says:

A primrose by the river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more,

may be extremely nice and worthy. But the individual who is clever enough to view that little primrose as a chrysanthemum, a rhododendron, or a narcissus, is nicer and worthier.

"Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace," in spite of its tawdry, almost pitiful theme, proved to be a witty, clever little comedy. For its theme it had—grand larceny! A society youth, hard up, and crippled by gambling debts, is staying in *Mrs. Jardin's* house, which also shelters *Mrs. Gorrings*. He steals the latter lady's diamond necklace, but relents, and hides it in a flower stand, right before the eyes of the audience.

A pleasant, middle-aged gentleman, *Captain Mowbray*, who uses handkerchiefs decorated with red borders, is suspected of the theft, because, when he finds the diamond necklace, in the aforesaid flower stand, it is wrapped up in one of his red-bordered handkerchiefs. As the young society thief has clandestinely married the girl whom *Mowbray* loves, that estimable person declines to brand her as the wife of a criminal. This penny-dreadful situa-

tion is saved by the prompt suicide of the young man, at the precise hour when respectable people begin to think of the post-theater oyster.

Trivial and third-rate, you will say? Yet of these shoddy materials, Hubert Henry Davies has made a play that is, at times, "high comedy." It has sparkling dialogue, entertaining views and smart, chatty people. The starved theatergoer, to whom a meaty "plot" is not the acme of bliss, must enjoy "Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace," but the usual theatergoer will tell you that it is a poor thing. I prefer it to a good many plays with far more original stories. I like a bright outlook, and unconventional treatment.

In this play, Miss Mary Moore, who had just begun to "rile" New York, and to call forth most uncomplimentary comments, saved herself by a capital piece of acting, and proved to us that there was more in her than we had supposed. Of course, Miss Moore is not great. Successful leading ladies in London dare not be great. The actor-manager is the "I-am," and the leading lady must not steal his thunder. Miss Mary Moore has done mild service for many years. Alfred Bishop and Miss Vane Featherston are the best members of this imported company. They are very capable people, and Miss Featherston, in particular, deserves attention.

Poor Mr. "Nat" Goodwin, who seems to have made "ducks and drakes" of himself lately, came to the Knickerbocker Theater, handicapped by an extraordinary affair called "The Usurper"—a very sad usurper, for it usurped the jolly, laughter-making plays that Mr. Goodwin used to produce. "Nat" Goodwin, like several actors with much talent but no grit, has suffered from the general paralysis of self-assertion. I may prophesy, and I do it with pleasure, that his ill-luck is probably at an end, for he has secured the enviable direction of Mr. Charles Frohman, and a new comedy that, from all accounts, will be immensely successful.

# FOR BOOK LOVERS

BY ARCHIBALD LOWERY SESSIONS

*The conventional love story and that of married lovers. Some books that suggest the distinction. "Double Harness," "The Undercurrent," "The Masquerader." Other books of this month*



HOSE who profess to have developed a sense of weariness and satiety with the kind of love story that they delight in calling conventional, in which the reader is given the assurance at the end of the last chapter that the hero and heroine spend the balance of their lives in unclouded married happiness, ought to have no fault to find with some of the novels that have recently appeared.

Whether or not, however, such a state of mind is more or less of a pose, assumed in deference to one of those "imaginary obligations" which Mr. Colby satirizes so entertainingly, is open to suspicion. For, after making every concession that can reasonably be demanded by this class of critics, the fact remains that the old-fashioned story of the successful culmination of youthful love and the permanent and uninterrupted happiness of the lovers, trite as it is, still retains its hold upon the imagination. And it is to be said, furthermore, that the fact is encouraging as being a symptom of a thoroughly sane and healthy condition of things, ethical as well as literary. For it indicates that there still exists among the masses of intelligent people a degree of simplicity of taste that so far saves society from the danger of becoming decadent.

So the opinion may be ventured that, on the whole, whenever the reading of a good love story of the old-fashioned type produces a genuine sensation of disgust, it is indicative of a condition that should convey a warning, even if it is not actually a symptom of disease.

It is not at all an uncommon thing to read or hear expressions of such a feeling, but one may be pardoned for receiving them with more or less scepticism, for they are generally given currency under such circumstances as to point to the conclusion that the desire is to produce an effect behind which there is no foundation of conviction.

But it must not be supposed that these observations are intended to reflect in any way upon the new books to which reference has been made, for, though they are not, perhaps, love stories of the strictly conventional kind, still they do show that the element that always predominates in such stories is still potent. The characters in them are no longer young and inexperienced, their love is not always fresh and unsullied; they are sometimes weak and worldly and sinful, but they are capable of developing a better side, and their affection is perhaps more fascinating because ripier, and more reasonably permanent because it rests upon the solid foundation of experience.

The mature reader will be apt to lay aside these books with a comfortable

feeling that what remains of life to the friends whose acquaintance he has made in them will bring no more unpleasant surprises; and that whatever sorrows there may be, they will entail no real unhappiness, for they will be of a kind that can be shared as fully as the joys.

In this respect these books will suggest Mrs. Cutting's "Little Stories of Married Life."

The conjugal affection of middle age, that has survived the bitter disappointment involved in the destruction of youthful ideals, that has acquiesced in the necessity of readjustment, and that has found in genuine self-sacrifice the means to happiness, is a theme that can be relied upon to interest as well as to uplift.

♦ ♦ ♦

There seems to be no special reason for surprise that Anthony Hope should write a story about the vicissitudes of married life, and yet one cannot escape a vague sensation of incongruity in connecting him with the authorship of "Double Harness," McClure, Phillips & Co. It seems like a very radical departure from the Zenda stories and the Dolly Dialogues, and even from "Tristram of Blent." Nevertheless, he has made a success of his experiment, if it can be called an experiment.

The story is an interesting one, and the plot, an extremely difficult one to handle, has been managed with the ease and tact and reserve of one who has thoroughly mastered it.

It is in substance the tale of the wreck of homes compassed by the pride, weakness and sin of husbands and wives, and the subsequent readjustments of their relations upon a foundation more secure than ever.

The author and his characters have been saved from hopeless cynicism by the solid common sense and love—broader, perhaps, than even she realized—of one woman who, likely enough to the minds of a good many people, was the greatest sinner of them all. For Christine, in spite of her infidelities, exerts an influence all through the book

which makes plain the rough places and straightens the crooked ways not only for herself and her husband, but for her friends. If the story has a heroine, it is she.

The cause of the difficulty between Sybilla and Imason is somewhat obscure. To the average male reader, the psychic process by which she convinces herself of the reality of her grievance against her husband will seem something like hysteria. Her willingness to elope with a man for whom she has no real love, for the avowed purpose of saving him from himself, is something perilously near burlesque, from which, however, the situation is saved by the intensely dramatic scene in which her husband compels her to abandon her plan and return to her home with him. The argument that he uses is startlingly effective.

♦ ♦ ♦

Judge Grant has displayed the traditional judicial acumen in portraying some of the principal characters in "The Undercurrent," Scribner's, for he has hewn so closely to the line that separates caricature from its opposite that a discussion can easily be started with plenty of serviceable ammunition for either side.

Whether, in his drawing of Mrs. Randolph Wilson and the Rev. Mr. Prentiss, there is an intentional satire of some well-known types of society may possibly be open to question, but is a fact that is not subject to dispute that if such persons were encountered in real life, they would not be able to avoid a suspicion, temporary perhaps, of their sincerity.

Such people naturally stimulate interest and curiosity, for when one is not quite sure of anything, he is, of course, always wondering whether the conclusions he is tempted to make are right or wrong.

Judge Grant very clearly shows the limitations which his legal training has imposed upon his natural gifts as a novelist, for he never once lets himself out; his narrative is subject to constant qualification in his reluctance to pass

upon more than the one issue presented for review. This even pervades the dialogue, and gives to his style something of the character of that of a judicial opinion.

The theme of the story is the question whether divorce is or should be subject to the jurisdiction of the church or State. It is to be presumed that the author has views of his own, but he shows his excellent taste in not obtruding them upon his readers. He has a capable champion in either the rector, Mr. Prentiss, or the attorney, Gordon Perry.

The argument of these two men, on the opposite sides of the question, is not only learned, but extremely interesting, for the reader cannot escape a sensation of suspense over the outcome.

A profound sympathy is enlisted for the wrongs and the suffering of Constance Stuart, who finds herself left in a cruelly unhappy condition by the desertion of her husband. The subsequent development of a mutual affection between her and Perry presents to her the problem of divorce very directly and very sharply.

In view of the reasons imputed to her for her decision against it, her final solution does not seem entirely logical.

It is a fine story and altogether intensely interesting; a decided literary achievement, which shows in every way an advance over "Unleavened Bread."



If there is anyone qualified to speak with authority respecting any of the various phases of Italian society, that one is surely Mr. Marion Crawford. At least, the authority with which his utterances on the subject have been characterized has gone so long unquestioned that it amounts to nearly the same thing.

In "Whosoever Shall Offend," just published by Macmillan, he has drawn a picture of the Roman peasant character that is pretty nearly as good as anything he has hitherto done, of its kind at least.

The story lacks the atmosphere of

refinement of the Saracinesca series, the delightful charm of "A Roman Singer," the lofty plane of "Mr. Isaacs," and the elemental strength of "Casa Braccio," of which, by the way, it is the most suggestive. But it has a distinct and impressive individuality of its own, which it derives chiefly, if not solely, from the influence exerted by the character of Regina, who, after she appears, pervades the plot.

That she is the important personage in the book is unquestioned, even though, as possibly the title indicates, she was not intended so to be by the author; Marcello, Folco, Aurora are all subordinated to her, and the effect of their presence is to show more distinctly by contrast the strength and weakness and charm of this woman whose almost primitive instincts and passions made her capable of her great renunciation.

The plot has no special novelty nor complexity. It is, if anything, more or less obvious, the only real point of suspense being the uncertainty as to Marcello's final choice between Aurora and Regina. Folco's villainy and the identity of his first victim are only thinly veiled in the first chapter. His methods are occasionally suggestive of melodrama.



"Black Friday," by Frederic S. Isham, Bobbs-Merrill Co., is a story of the Wall Street of the days of Jay Gould and Jim Fisk.

The central episode, about which the plot of the story is constructed, is the attempt made by Gould and Fisk to corner the gold market. The preparations made by them to accomplish it, the progress of their plans and their final defeat by the hero, Richard Strong, with the co-operation of the Federal government, under the direction of President Grant, to whom Strong makes a direct and personal appeal, make up the action of the story, and it is stirring enough to suit the strongest taste.

One of the accessories is the account of Strong's experiences with a woman who, supposing she did not love him,

nevertheless married him to restore the fallen fortunes of her father and mother, and too late found her position as a wife intolerable. Later, however, circumstances combined to develop a passion for her husband, and the book closes with a somewhat fervid scene between them.

It is, on the whole, a first-rate representation of the type to which it belongs; the author, in addition, has succeeded in realizing, to a considerable extent, the atmosphere of the times, and in the main the characterization is good.



The work of Katherine C. Thurston, prior to the publication of her last book, has been of such a character as to find a perfectly logical fulfillment in the extraordinary success which has come to "The Masquerader," published by Harpers. Her short stories, some of which have appeared in *AINSLIE'S*, notably "The Climax" and "Votive Offering," and her first novel, "The Circle," have all shown the masterful grasp of the deeper and stronger currents of human life. And if the situations that she creates are unusual, she deals with them in such a way as never to offend the reader's sense of proportion.

In "The Masquerader" she has undertaken the experiment of reincarnating in another the personality of a man who has wrecked his life by the use of drugs, and continuing a promising and useful career by means of the substitution. Of course, the success of a story based on such a theme seems, at first, much more than problematical; everything depends upon the manner in which it is handled. But it is not too much to say of "The Masquerader," that after the plot is once developed the reader gives no thought to what, at first, seems the impossibility of the story. After the relations are established between the morphine victim, John Chilcote, and his substitute, Loder, the successive situations unfold themselves so naturally, the dramatic episodes follow each other so logically, and the people are made to act their parts

so skillfully, that the spectator pays attention to nothing else.

The chief interest centers in the passages between Eve Chilcote, the wife, and her husband's impersonator. For by means of them is traced the gradual return of confidence in the man she believes to be her husband, of whose habits she is aware, and the awakening of a love she has never before felt for him. That she is prepared to accept the natural consequences of her confidence and love, after she has discovered Loder's secret, and to cast her lot with the man who has inspired it, is evidence of her strength of character.

As for Loder himself, whatever opinion one may entertain of his willingness to engage in the deception proposed by Chilcote, his character is drawn with such art, that he easily takes his place as the hero of the story, who commands respect as well as sympathy and even affection.

The other characters are presented with the same discriminative power, and they, together with the movement of the plot, work toward the climax like a perfect piece of machinery.

The moral questions involved in the story need not be discussed here further than to say that they play their proper part in giving atmosphere and color.



One of the advantages of telling a story of the Latin Quarter is that the author is sure, beforehand, of an audience which is anxious to be sympathetic and responsive. So for a first book the theme is a fortunate one, especially when the writer is as familiar with it as André Castaigne is.

Mr. Castaigne, who has achieved greatness as an artist, is reported to have said that he was led to write "Fata Morgana," published by the Century Co., partly because he was anxious to test his capacity in another field of work and partly because he had been made to feel the contempt with which the illustrator is regarded by the author. The result of his labor must be a source of considerable satisfaction to him.



"Fata Morgana" is a romance, the theme of which is of value chiefly for the presentation of types and the exposition of the local color.

The plot is developed around the relations established between four persons, the complications being in the main such as usually grow out of uncertainty in love affairs.

Helia, the circus acrobat, is a thoroughly womanly and lovable character, in spite of her occupation, and the constancy and purity of her love for Phil Longwill, a young American artist, presents a very attractive picture, even if it is somewhat unusual in a story of this kind.

Phil himself and the Duke of Morgania both show some instability in their respective attitudes toward Helia and Ethel Rowrer, who has the advantage of being an heiress. The outcome is entirely satisfactory, though one cannot escape the feeling that Phil fares better than he deserves.

Caracal is a character perhaps more worthy of careful study than the others, because he seems to be intended by the author as representative of a certain tendency toward degeneracy in French society.

Not the least valuable part of the book is the series of Mr. Castaigne's illustrations, which are thoroughly characteristic of the artist's strong individuality.



The very obvious failure to make the most of his opportunity makes Jack London's story, "The Sea Wolf," Macmillan, an almost exasperating disappointment.

It was a splendidly conceived tale, and is, even as it stands, absorbing, but its unfulfilled possibilities inevitably cool the reader's enthusiasm.

The book begins with the freshness,

strength and freedom of the ocean itself, and one is carried along in spite of himself by the tremendous vitality of the narrative until he becomes convinced, if, indeed, he stops to think about it at all, that here is a really great book. But with the introduction of the woman into the history of the Sea Wolf, the first false note is struck and the story begins to degenerate, and, compared with what precedes, the balance is lamentably weak and almost mawkish.

Mr. London has, it seems to us, tried, unsuccessfully, of course, to combine two utterly incongruous elements. He has drawn, in Wolf Larsen, a portrait of extraordinary strength, a man who knows nothing but the evil side of life, yet with a certain physical and intellectual refinement and courage which have made him uniformly dominant in the environment in which he has been placed. He has no aim beyond the execution of his own will, and employs no methods but those of brute force. Such a man, an autocrat on the little sealing schooner which he commands and owns, makes life a constant horror to his crew.

To introduce into such conditions two persons, a man and a woman, of refined and cultivated tastes, accustomed to the luxuries and manners of civilized society, between whom and the Sea Wolf there can exist no possible sympathy or understanding, is to undertake a perilous experiment. The contrasts are damaging not only to Larsen, but to Maud Brewster and Van Weyden.

In comparison with his character and deeds, Larsen's end is tame and, in fiction, inappropriate.

Nevertheless, the book is immensely interesting, and, in spite of these defects, or perhaps we ought to say because of them, instructive.

